

An Exegesis of the Qur'ān

BY:

al-'Allāmah as-Sayyid Muḥammad
Ḥusayn aṭ-Ṭabāṭabā'ī

VOLUME 4

Translated by:

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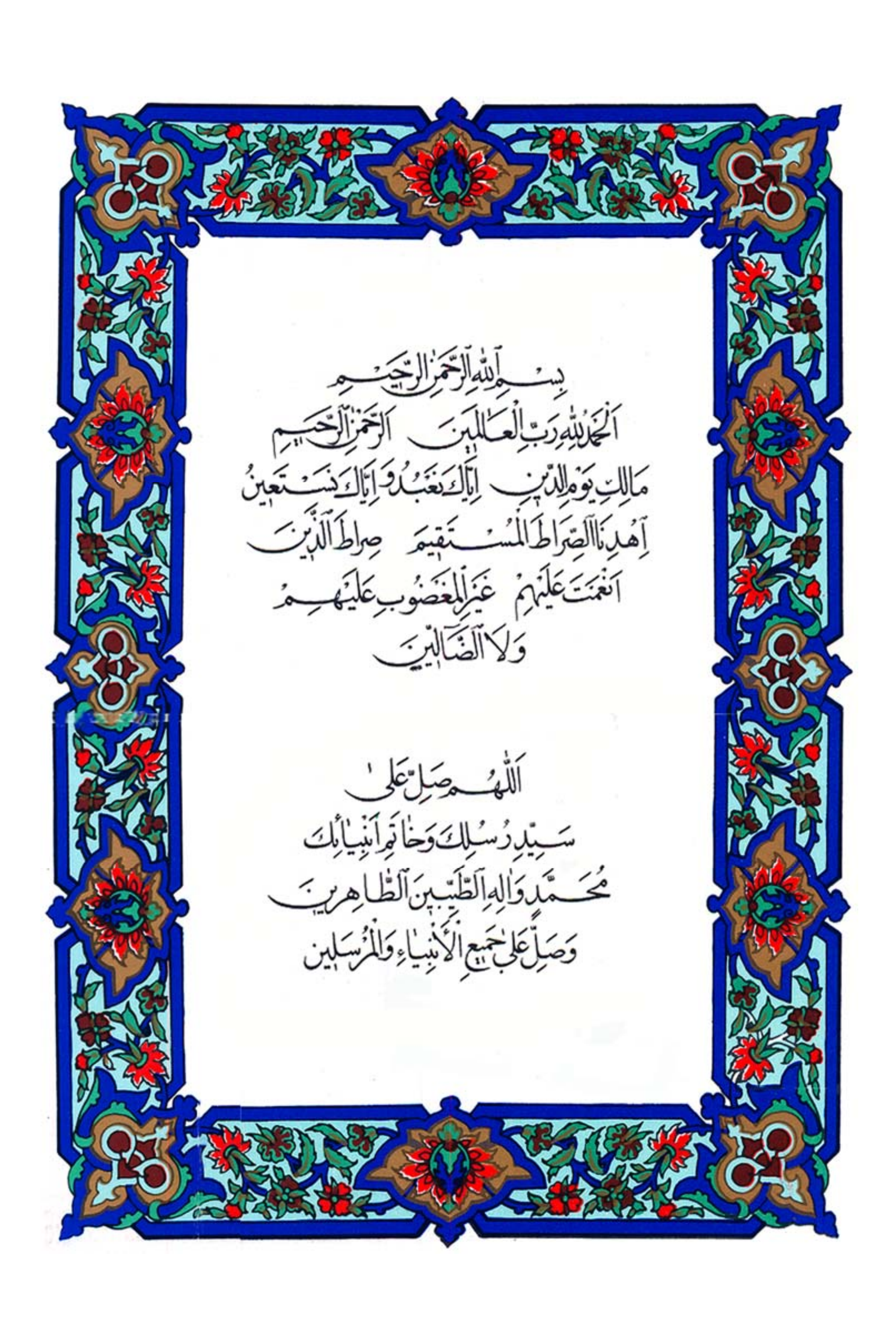
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In the Name of Allāh,
The All-compassionate. The All-merciful

Praise belongs to Allāh. the Lord of all being.
the All-compassionate, the All-merciful:
the Master of the Day of Judgement:
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we pray
for succour:
Guide us in the straight path:
the path of those tthomt Thou host blessed.
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful.
nor of those who are astray.

*****

O' Allāh! send your blessings to the head of
your messengers and the last of
your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send your blessings to all your
prophets and envoys.



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العالمين الرحمن الرحيم
مالك يوم الدين إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين
اهدنا الصراط المستقيم صراط الذين
أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم
ولا الضالين

اللهم صل على
سيد رسلك وخاتم أنبيائك
محمد وآله الطيبين الطاهرين
وصل على جميع الأنبياء والمرسلين

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TRANSLITERATION

ARABIC LETTERS

Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
ء	**’**	ك	**k**
ب	**b**	ل	**l**
ت	**t**	م	**m**
ث	**th**	ن	**n**
ج	**j**	ه	**h**
ح	**ḥ**	و	**w**
خ	**kh**	ي	**y**
د	**d**	ة	**ah, at**
ذ	**dh**		(construct state)
ر	**r**	ال	article **al-** and **’l** (even before the antepalatals)
ز	**z**		
س	**s**		
ش	**sh**		**Long Vowels**
ص	**ṣ**	آ	**ã**
ض	**ḍ**	و	ũ
ط	**ṭ**	ي	**ī**
ظ	**ẓ**		
ع	**‘ or ʿ**		**Short Vowels**
غ	**gh**	ـَ	**a**
ف	**f**	ـُ	**u**
ق	**q**	ـِ	**i**

تصدير

١- العلاّمة الشّهير و المفكّر و الفيلسوف الإسلاميّ المعاصر، السّيّد محمّد حسين الطّباطبائي (١٣٢١/١٩٠٤-١٤٠٢/١٩٨١) رحمه الله سبق و أن عرّفناه بعض التّعريف في تصديرنا للجزء الأوّل من التّرجمة الإنجليزيّة للميزان، الّذي سينشر، بحول الله و قوّته، في القريب العاجل.

٢- اشتهر العلاّمة الطّباطبائي رحمه الله بالعديد من آثاره و أهمّها تفسيره الكبير (الميزان في تفسير القرآن) الّذي يصحّ أن يعدّ الدّعامة الأساسيّة للتّقدير العلميّ الّذي ناله العلاّمة الطّباطبائي في العالم الاسلاميّ.

٣- شعرنا بالضّرورة الملحّة إلى نشر تفسير للقرآن الكريم بالانجليزيّة، وبعد مداولات و استشارات، وقع اختيارنا على (الميزان) لانّا وجدناه يجمع الى حدّ ما، بين النّقاط الّتي لابدّ منها في تفسير متكامل للقرآن الكريم و بين ما تتطلّبه الذّهنيّة المعاصرة للقارئ المسلم فاقترحنا على الأستاذ العلاّمة السّيّد سعيد أختر رضوي القيام بهذه المهمّة، لما نعهده فيه من القدرة العلميّة على فهم النّصّ العربيّ، و كفاءته الأدبيّة في التّعبير و التّرجمة، و قد اعتمدنا عليه في ذلك، ليكون هو الزّعيم بالتّرجمة الانجليزيّة و المسئول عنها، كما كان العلاّمة الطّباطبائي رحمه الله هو الزّعيم ببحوث الكتاب و المرجع المسئول عنها.

٤- قدّمنا نشر ترجمة الجزء الثاني من (الميزان) لأنّه كان قد تهيّأ للنشر، والجزء الأوّل لم يتهيّأ بعد - لأسباب لا نريد أن نشرح أمرها هنا - فلم نر من الصّالح إرجاء نشره. وقد وضعنا قائمتين (الأولى) باسماء المؤلّفين الوارد ذكرهم في مجموع أجزاء (الميزان) و(الثّانية) بأسماء الكتب الّتي هي بحاجة الى التّعريف، وقد ألحقنا هاتين القائمتين بالجزء الأوّل من التّرجمة الانجليزيّة. ولكنّا وضعنا جدولين آخرين يجدهما القارئ ملحقين بكل جزء من أجزاء التّرجمة.

ومن الله سبحانه نسأل، واليه نبتهل أن يجعل عملنا خالصا لوجهه الكريم، وأن يوفّقنا لإتمام ما بدأنا ويسدّدنا في خطوتنا هذه وخطواتنا المقبلة، إنّه نعم المولى ونعم النّصير.

١٤٠٢/٤/٦	**المؤسّسة العالميّة للخدمات الإسلاميّة**
١٩٨٢/٢/١	**(لجنة التّأليف والتّرجمة والنّشر)**
	طهران — ايران

FOREWORD

1. al-'Allāmah as-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn aṭ-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1321/1904 — 1402/1981) — may Allāh have mercy upon him — was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of *al-Mīzān* which will be published, by the help of Allāh, in the near future.

2. al-'Allāmah aṭ-Ṭabāṭabā'ī is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis *al-Mīzān fī tafsīri 'l-Qur'ān* which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the 'Allāmah has achieved in the Islamic world.

3. We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān in English. After a thorough consultation, we came to choose *al-Mīzān* because we found that it contained in itself, to a considerable extent, the points which should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān and the points which appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader. Therefore, we proposed to al-Ustādh al-'Allāmah as-Sayyid Sa'īd Akhtar ar-Raḍawī to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of *al-Mīzān* and his literary capability in expression and translation. So we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation as al-'Allāmah aṭ-Ṭabāṭabā'ī was responsible for the Arabic text of *al-Mīzān* and its discussions.

4. We have proceeded to publish the translation of the second volume of the Arabic *al-Mīzān* earlier as it was ready for printing, whereas the first volume is not ready yet for the reasons which we do not wish to state here. So we saw no reason in delaying its printing. We have included two

appendixes: one for the authors cited in all the volumes of *al-Mīzān*, and the other for the books cited therein. These two appendixes have been attached to the first volume of the English translation. Apart from this, the reader will find two appendixes in all the volumes of the translation of *al-Mīzān*.

* * * * *

We implore upon Allāh to effect our work purely for His pleasure, and to help us to complete this work which we have started. May Allāh guide us in this step which we have taken and in the future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

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وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ـ٢٢٤. لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَٰكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ
بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ـ ٢٢٥ . لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ
تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ـ٢٢٦. وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ـ ٢٢٧ .

And make not Allāh a target of your swearing (by Him) *against your doing good and guarding* (against evil) *and making peace between men, and Allāh is Hearing, Knowing* (224). *Allāh will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned, and Allāh is Forgiving, Forbearing* (225). *For those who swear* (to abstain) *from their wives is* (ordained) *a waiting for four months; then if they go back, then Allāh is surely Forgiving, Merciful* (226). *And if they resolved on divorce, then Allāh is surely Hearing, Knowing* (2:227).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *And make not Allāh . . . and Allāh is Hearing, Knowing.''* *al-''Urḍah''* (العُرْضَة) is derived from *al-'arḍ* (العَرْضُ) which means to display a thing to show its fitness for the purpose for which it is made. For example, to display goods for sale, to show a house for rent,

to offer food for consumption. Some of the uses of *al-'urḍah* are: a target for shooting practice is called *al-'urḍah* of the arrows; a horse readied for a journey is called *al-'urḍah* for travel; a girl of marriageable age is called *al-'urḍah* of marriage. All these are relevant to its original meaning. But the use of this word for a hindrance on the road (and other similar uses) have come into vogue later as metaphors.

''al-Aymān'' (اَلأَيْمَانُ) is plural of *al-yamīn* (اليَمينُ) and means ''oaths''. Its original meaning is the right hand. As they strike by, raise, or give, the right hand when taking an oath, showing allegiance or concluding a deal, the word was metaphorically used for the oath, borrowing the organ of an action for the action itself, because of their mutual relationship. This same relationship also allows the use of the name of the action for its organ, as *as-sabbābah* (السَّبَّابَة = the one who abuses) is used for the forefinger which is often used to point with when abusing.

The meaning of the verse, then, shall be as follows (And Allāh knows better!):

And do not use (the name of) *Allāh* (like) *a target upon which to attach your oaths which you have sworn to the effect that you will not do a good deed or will not guard yourselves against evil or will not make peace between people; because Allāh does not like it that His name be made a means of desisting from what He Himself has ordered.* (This meaning is supported by the traditions which will be quoted later.)

Based on this meaning, the verse can be analysed grammatically in three ways : —

a) *An tabarrū* (اَنْ تَبَرُّوا = literal meaning: that you do good) is in fact *an la tabarrū* (اَنْ لا تَبَرُّوا = that you do not do good). In the translation we have followed this meaning and the negative has been expressed by the word ''against'' (your swearing against your doing). Such an omission of the negative is common after ''*an*'' (اَنْ) which turns the verb into an infinitive. See for example verse 175 of ch. 4: *Allāh makes it clear for you* (lest) *you err.* (4:177)

b) Or there is no omission; and the words ''your doing good . . .'' is governed by the negative ''make not''. The meaning, in this case, will be that Allāh forbids you to take such oaths.

c) Or the *al-'urḍah* (target) may imply excess, as a target is used for shooting practice. The verse, in this case, will be a prohibition of excessive swearing by the name of Allāh. It will mean, ''Do not swear every now and then by the name of Allāh, because it will lead you to abstain from doing good, etc.'' A habitually swearing man does not care what he swears about. As he becomes used to it, it loses its importance, and it may encourage him to make a false oath. This much about his own attitude. So far as society is concerned, he will lose his respect, people will look down upon him — after all, swearing implies that the man himself is not sure that people will accept his words as true. If, in this way, he degrades his own words, why should other believe what he says. Ultimately, he will become a subject of the verse: *and do not obey* (i.e. accept the words of) *any mean swearer.* (68:10)

The words of Allāh, ''and Allāh is Hearing, Knowing'' are a sort of threatening, whatever meaning one accepts of the preceding sentence. But the first meaning (upon which our translation is based) is the most obvious.

QUR'ĀN: *Allāh will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned* . . . : A *''al-laghw''* (اللَّغْوُ = vain) action is that which has no effect. The effect of a thing varies according to variations in its attachments, etc. An oath may have an effect in so far as it is a word, or in so far as, it emphasizes speech; or thirdly in so far as it is a vow; or fourthly if it is broken, or if one perjures, and so on. In this verse the vain oath is contrasted with that (oath) which hearts have earned. It shows that the vain oath here means that which has no effect on the intention of the speaker, that is, such oaths which one utters (like 'No, By God', 'Yes, By God') without taking those words seriously.

''*al-Kasb''* (الكَسْبُ) means to earn profits by a work or profession etc. Originally, it was used for the obtaining of those things which fulfil material needs. Then it was metaphorically used for any good or evil a man may get as a result of any of his actions, like earning praise and good reputation through good character and social services, and earning good knowledge, superiority, and nobility by striving for them; or earning condemnation, abuse, and slander; or sin and error by one's evil actions. This is the meaning of *al-kasb* and *al-iktisāb* (الاكْتِسَابُ).

Some people say that *al-iktisāb* is used when one earns a benefit for one's own self; and *al-kasb* refers to earning a benefit whether it is done for one's own self or for others, as when a servant earns for his master, or a guardian for his ward.

In any case the active participle *al-kāsib* (الكَاسِبُ) and *al-muktasib* (المُكْتَسِبُ), (both of which mean ''one who earns'') are used only for a human being.

THE MEANING OF ''HEART'' IN THE QUR'ĀN

The above explanation is a proof that the words ''your hearts'' in the verse refer to the man himself — his spirit and soul. The faculties of thought, understanding, love, hate, fear, and so forth, may be attributed (basing what one says on the common man's belief) to the heart, as hearing is attributed to the ears, sight to the eyes, and taste to the tongue. But the word 'earning' can only be attributed to man. As the verse uses the expression, ''for what your hearts have earned'', it proves that the ''heart'' here stands for the 'soul', 'spirit'.

The same meaning applies to the verses: . . . *his heart is surely sinful* (2:283) and: . . . *and comes with a penitent heart.* (50:33)

When man looked at animals and at himself he found that perceptions and thinking sometimes become ineffective, for example, during epilepsy or lunacy, yet life continues, as is witnessed by the heart-beat and the pulse. This led him to believe that the source of life is the heart; he thought that the spirit of life first attaches itself to the heart, and that it is from there that life extends to all parts of the body. He further believed that all the psychological faculties, such as perception, will, love, hate, hope, fear and other such things, belong to the heart because it is the seat of the psyche — the spirit. Of course, every organ is the source of its own function — the mind for thinking, the eyes for seeing, the ears for hearing, the lungs for breathing, and so on. But all are like tools which are used in the work they are made for; it is the heart that is the tool-wielder.

And it is a fact that physical research and experiments have not been able to pin-point the source of control which rules over the whole body. There is no doubt that the limbs and organs of the

body, even though they are different from each other and have different functions and duties to perform, are united under the control of one ruling power, and are really one unit.

It is not that the ancients were not aware of the mind and its functions. Man knew the importance of the head from the very beginning. Does one not see that all the nations and races, with their different languages, name the ‘‘authority’’ the ‘‘head’’, and with it its derivatives. For example *ar-ra'S* (الرَّأسُ = head), *ar-riyāsah* (الرِّيَاسَةُ = headship, meaning presidency) and *ar-ra'īs* (الرَّئِيسُ = head, that is, President). Then there are the phrases like head of a thread, the head (beginning) of a period, the head (starting-point) of a distance, the head (beginning) of a speech, the head (summit) of a mountain, a head (individual number) of animals or cattle, the head of the year (new year's day), etc.

Apparently, this is the reason why people attribute perception and thinking and sentiments (which are not totally void of perception) like love, hate, hope, fear, will, envoy, chastity, bravery, etc. to the heart. But by heart they mean the spirit which runs into or is attached to, the body. They attribute perceptions and sentiments to the heart, as well as to the spirit and soul, and also to their own selves. They say: I love him; my soul loves him, my heart loves him. Then the metaphorical use of heart for spirit and soul came into general use; then this use was extended to the breast, because the breast contains the heart; and, therefore, to it were attributed the faculties of perception, action and the sentiments.

There are many such uses in the Qur'ān: . . . *He expands his breast for Islam* . . . (6:125); . . *your breast straitens at what they say* (15:97); . . . *and the hearts rose up to the throats* . . alluding to the constriction of the breast (33:10); *Surely, Allāh knows whatever is in your breasts.* (5:7)

A point to consider: Can these expressions not be a support for the common belief mentioned earlier, even if it is yet to be clarified? Shaykh Abū 'Alī ibn Sīnā is inclined to believe that it is the heart that perceives, and the brain is its tool.

Anyhow, now we come back to the verse. The sentence, ‘‘but He

will call you to account for what your hearts have earned'', is a metaphor in a metaphor. The. preceding sentence says: *Allāh will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths.* The contrasting sentence should have been, ''. . . for what is firmly considered of your oath''. Instead it mentions the effect, that is, the sin, which will come into being if one breaks that vow. It is done to show that Allāh looks only at the heart, as He says:. . . *and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it Allāh will call you to account for it* (2:284); *There does not reach Allāh their flesh nor their blood, but to Him reaches your piety . . .* (22:37)

The words, ''and Allāh is Forgiving, Forbearing'', hint at the undesirability of vain swearing and oath-taking, because such a thing should not be done by a believer. Allāh says: *Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, and who keep aloof from what is vain . . .* (23:1 — 3)

QUR'ĀN: *For those who swear* (to abstain) *from their wives. . . surely Hearing, Knowing:''al-Ilā' ''*(الإيْلاَء = to swear), in Islamic jurisprudence, means the swearing by husband that he will not go to his wife, provided it is done in anger with an intention to harm the wife. This is the meaning intended in this verse. The preposition ''from'' after the verb ''swear'' gives the meaning of distance; thus the verse implies the meaning of swearing to abstain and to remain aloof from the wife. The waiting of four months implies the same, because it is the period at the end of which cohabitation is, according to the *sharī'ah,* obligatory on the husband.

''If they resolved on divorce''.The verse means the intention followed by its implementation. It is also implied by the words, ''Allāh is surely Hearing, Knowing'', because ''Hearing'' can be applied to the spoken words of the divorce, not its intention only.

The words at the end of verse 2:225, ''Allāh is Forgiving, Forbearing'', show that if one goes back to his wife then one shall not be punished in the hereafter. So far as this life is concerned, he is obliged to pay its penalty, *al-kaffārah* (الكَفَّارَةُ) because this penalty is not forgiven. Allāh says: *Allāh does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths; so its expiation is the feeding of ten poor men out of the average* (food)

you feed your families with, or their clothing, or the freeing of a neck, but whosoever cannot find (means) *then fasting for three days; this the expiation of your oaths when you swear. And guard your oaths.* (5:89)

The meaning of the verses is that if one swears to abstain from his wife, then the Muslim Qāḍī (judge) shall give him a time of four months to go back to her. If by the end of that period, he gives the penalty for the oath, and establishes .sexual relations with her, then he shall get no punishment in the hereafter. If on the other hand, he decides to divorce her, that is another way out. And Allāh is Hearing, Knowing.

TRADITIONS

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī, from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) about the words of Allāh: *And make not Allāh a target of your swearing,* that he (the Imām) said: ''It is the word of man: 'No, by God', 'Yes, by God'.''

Another tradition in the same book, from al-Bāqir and aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.), about this verse, says: ''That is, a man swears that he would not talk with his brother, and other such oaths, or that he would not talk with his mother.''

Another tradition in *al-Kāfī* from aṣ-Sādiq (a.s.) about it says: ''When you are called to make peace between two persons, do not say on oath that you will not carry out.''

The author says: The first tradition gives one explanation of the verse, the second and third give another. There is another tradition of nearly the same meaning in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī from al-Bāqir and aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that they said: ''He is the man who makes peace between two persons, and carries the burden of the sin that is between them . . .'' Apparently the tradition means that such a man should not swear that he will not try to do it; he should make peace between them, even if he has to carry the sin, and Allāh will forgive him, and he will be an example of him who follows this verse.

There is in *al-Kāfī* from Mas'adah from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he said about the verse: *Allāh will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths* . . . ''Vain is the saying of a man, 'No, by God', and 'Yes, by God', without having any firm intention about anything.''

The author says: The same meaning is narrated in *al-kāfī* from him by another chain; and in *al-Majma‘u ’l-bayān* from him and al-Bāqir (a.s.).

There is a narration in *al-Kāfī* from both Imāms that they said: ‘‘If a man swears that he will not go near his wife, then she has not got any say or any right for four months; and he has no sin in not going to her in that period. If the four months pass away and he does not touch her, then, so long as she is silent and does not complain, he is absolved and free (from any responsibility). Then if she brings her case (before the Qāḍī), the husband will be told: either go back to her and touch her or divorce her. ‘Resolve of divorce’ means that he should leave her; then when she sees her monthly blood and (afterwards) becomes clean, he will divorce her. And he has, moreover, the right of *ar-raj‘ah* (الرَّجْعَة = returning to her; revoking the divorce) before the expiry of three monthly periods. So this is the *al-’īlā’,* which Allāh revealed in His Book, and which the Apostle of Allāh ordained. ’’

There is in the same book a tradition from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) in which he says, *inter alia:* ‘‘And *al-’īlā’* is that he says, ‘By Allāh, I shall not cohabit with thee so and so’ or says, ‘By Allāh, I shall put thee to sorrow’, and then puts her to sorrow.’’

The author says: There are some differences between Sunnis and Shī‘ahs about some particulars of *al-’īlā’*; but the discussion of it concerns Islamic jurisprudence.

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلاَ يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا
خَلَقَ اللهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ
فِي ذٰلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلاَحاً وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ
دَرَجَةٌ وَاللهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ـ ٢٢٨. الطَّلاَقُ مَرَّتَانِ فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ
بِإِحْسَانٍ وَلاَ يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئاً إِلاَّ أَنْ يَخَافَا أَ لاَّ
يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلاَّ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللهِ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ
تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللهِ فَلاَ تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللهِ فَأُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ
ـ ٢٢٩. فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلاَ تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجاً غَيْرَهُ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلاَ
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ـ ٢٣٠ . وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ
بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلاَ تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَاراً لِتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ
ذٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلاَ تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللهِ هُزُواً وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللهِ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ
اللهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ـ ٢٣١ وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلاَ تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ
أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ذٰلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ
مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ ذٰلِكُمْ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللهُ يَعْلَمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ـ ٢٣٢ . وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلاَدَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ
أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لاَ

تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَلَدِهِ وَعَلَى
الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَٰلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا
وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ـ ٢٣٣ . وَالَّذِينَ
يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا
فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ـ ٢٣٤ . وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاءِ
أَوْ أَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَلِمَ اللهُ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَٰكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلَّا
أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا تَعْزِمُوا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ
أَجَلَهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ
ـ ٢٣٥ . لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمَسُّوهُنَّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ
فَرِيضَةً وَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمُوسِعِ قَدَرُهُ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهُ مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ ـ ٢٣٦ . وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمَسُّوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ
لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ
النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَنْسَوُا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
بَصِيرٌ ـ ٢٣٧ . حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ
ـ ٢٣٨ . فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ
مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ـ ٢٣٩ . وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا
وَصِيَّةً لِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَعْرُوفٍ وَاللهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ـ ٢٤٠ .
وَلِلْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ـ ٢٤١ . كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللهُ
لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ـ ٢٤٢ .

And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly courses; and it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allāh has created in their womb, if they believe in Allāh and the last day; and their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation; and they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is (right) *a degree above them, and Allāh is Mighty, Wise* (228). *Divorce is twice; then keep* (them) *in fairness or let (them) go with kindness; and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them, unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh; then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh, there is no blame on them for what she gives up* (to become free thereby). *These are the limits of Allāh, so do not exceed them, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allāh then these it is that are the unjust* (229). *So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband; then if he divorces her there is no blame on them both if they return to each other* (by marriage), *if they both think that they can keep within the limits of Allāh, and these are the limits of Allāh which He makes clear for a people who know* (230). *And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness, and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self, and do not take Allāh's signs for a mockery, and remember the favour of Allāh upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby; and fear Allāh, and know that Allāh is the Knower of all things* (231). *And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term* (of waiting), *then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner; with this is admonished whosoever among you believe in Allāh and the last day; this is more profitable and purer for you; and Allāh knows while you do not know* (232). *And the mothers should suckle their children for two complete years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling, and their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to usage; no soul shall have imposed upon it a*

duty but to the extent of its capacity; neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child; and a similar duty (devolves) *on the* (father's) *heir; then if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel, there is no blame on them; and if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage; and fear Allāh and know that Allāh sees what you do* (233). *And* (as for) *those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten* (days); *then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner; and Allāh is aware of what you do* (234). *And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of* (such) *women in marriage or keep* (the proposal) *concealed within your minds; Allāh knows that you will soon mention them, but do not give them a promise in secret unless you speak in a proper manner; and do not resolve the marriage-tie until the prescribed term is completed, and know that Allāh knows what is in your mind, therefore beware of Him, and know that Allāh is Forgiving, Forbearing* (235). *There is no blame on you if you divorce the women while yet you have not touched them or appointed for them a dowry, and make provision for them, on the wealthy according to his means, and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage;* (this is) *a duty on the doers of good* (to other) (236). *And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed for them a dowry, then* (pay to them) *half of what you have appointed, unless they remit or he remits in whose hand is the marriagetie; and it is nearer to piety that you should remit, and do not forget generosity between you; surely Allāh sees what you do* (237). *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allāh* (238). *But if you are in danger, then* (say your prayers) *on foot or on horseback; and when you are secure, then remember Allāh as He has taught you what you did not know* (239). *And those of you who die and leave wives behind,* (make) *a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for the year without turning* (them) *out, then if they themselves go away, there is no blame*

on you for what they do of proper deeds about themselves, and Allāh is Mighty, Wise (240). *And for the divorced women* (too) *provision (should be made) according to usage; (this is) a duty on those who guard* (against evil) (241). *Thus Allāh makes clear to you His signs, so that you may understand* (242).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

These verses promulgate the laws concerning divorce and the period of waiting as well as about a divorcee suckling her child ; in middle of it are some rules concerning prayer.

QUR'ĀN: *And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly periods: ''aṭ-Ṭalāq''* (الطَّلاَقُ) literally means to release from bonds, to remove the fetters. Then it was metaphorically used for releasing the women from the tie of marriage, and it was so exclusively used in this sense that eventually it became its real meaning.

''Yatarabbaṣna bi anfusihinna'' (يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ = should keep themselves in waiting) : *at-tarabbuṣ* (التَّرَبُّصُ) is to wait, to hold back. This word is followed here by *''bi anfusihinna''* (بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ ; literal meaning = concerning their own selves) ; it thus gives the meaning that they should not attach themselves to any man. In other words, it ordains the rule of *al-'iddah* (العِدَّةُ = waiting period) of divorce.

''A woman is in *al-'iddah''* means that she is holding herself back from marrying again, lest the sperm of the original and subsequent husbands be mixed, and genealogies and consanguinity be corrupted.

The words ''should keep themselves in waiting'' thus not only legislate a law but also hint at its philosophy. It is not necessary for that philosophy and benefit to be found in every individual case; the laws are made keeping in view the good of the majority of people, not all.

The words thus mean: the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting, by not giving themselves to another husband, so that the sperm should not be mixed and consanguinity and parentage not corrupted.

It is an order, but the sentence (in Arabic) is constructed as a statement. This form of expression is used for emphasis.

‘‘al-Qurū’ ’’(القُرُوءُ) is the plural of *al-qur’* (القُرْءُ). This is used for the monthly period and also for the period of cleanliness; and is, thus, a word made with two opposite meanings, as some people have said. But the fact is that its root *q-r-’* (قرء) indicates collection, gathering, joining together, but not every collection and gathering, only that which is followed by dispersal and transmission. Keeping this in view, it is obvious that the original meaning of *al-qur’*, would have been the period of cleanliness, because it is the time when blood accumulates in the womb; then it was used also for the period of menstruation because it is the time when blood is discharged after its accumulation.

al-Qar’ (القَرْءُ) is also used for reading and reciting, because in recitation and reading, letters and words are first joined together and then proclaimed. The scholars of language have clearly said that *al-qar’* means collection and gathering. And that it indicates such gathering may be inferred from the following verses: *Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. Surely on Us is the collecting of it and ‘‘qur’ānahu’’* (قُرْآنَهُ) *the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, then follow its recitation* (75:16 — 18). *And a Qur’ān which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees* . . . (17:106).

Both verses are concerned with the collection and revelation of the Book of Allāh; and in both it is referred to as the Qur’ān, not as the Book or the Furqān etc.

It is for the same reason that it is given the name Qur’ān.

ar-Rāghib says in his *al-Mufradāt: al-Qur’* in fact means the start of the menses after cleanliness. As it has two elements in its meaning — cleanliness and the following menses — it is used for both meanings, even separately. When a noun is made for a meaning with two elements, it is also used for those elements separately. For example *al-mā’idah* (المَآئِدَةُ) is used for a table upon which food is arranged; now it is often used either for the table only or the food only. But *al-qur’* was originally made for cleanliness only nor for the menses only. A girl who has not yet seen blood is not said to be in *al-qur’*; likewise a sick woman whose blood continues without stopping is not said to to be in *al-qur’*.

QUR’ĀN: *And it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allāh has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allāh and the last day:* The divorced woman should not conceal the fact of her being

pregnant or her monthly period. Without this prohibition she might have been tempted to conceal it, so that she might soon complete the *al-'iddah* or that her husband might not get chance of revoking the divorce.

This prohibition of concealment has a proviso: ''If they believe in Allāh and the last day'', while the basic law of the waiting period has no such clause. This clause shows that the order given is an essential requirement of the belief, and the women must adhere to it faithfully and scrupulously. It is as we say: Live with the people honestly if you want good.

QUR'ĀN: And their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation: ''al-Bu'ūlah'' (الْبُعُوْلَةُ) is plural of al-ba'l (البَعْلُ), which means the male spouse, so long as the couple are married. Later, the word acquired a shade of meaning of domination, strength and firmness, because of the position of the husband vis-a-vis the wife. Now, we find other usages all based on this meaning. For example, a horse rider is called its *al-ba'l*; a high land is called *al-ba'l*, there was an idol named *ba'l* (بَعْلُ), and a date-tree is named *al-ba'l* when it grows high.

''Their husbands'': The pronoun ''their'' stands for ''the divorced women''. But the order is not for those who are given an irrevocable divorce; it is meant only for those divorced revocably.

''In the meanwhile'' refers to the period of waiting.

The proviso, ''if they wish for reconciliation'', is very important. It shows that taking them back, that is, the revocation of the divorce, must be. with good intention, with a wish to make amends. The husband should not revoke the divorce only to inflict harm and injury upon the woman, because, such a behaviour is clearly forbidden in the verse, ''and do not retain them for injury.''

''Aḥaqq'' (اَحَقُّ) is the comparative (and superlative) and means ''having more right''. it always requires another person having less right. For example, the previous husband had a right to the divorcee, and the other proposers also have right to her, but the previous husband has more right to her, because of the previous marriage-tie.

But this meaning apparently is not correct here, because this verse is not talking about a fresh marriage; it is speaking about ''taking them back'', revoking the divorce; and it is a right which no one shares with him. So, why use the phrase ''have a better right''? The fact is that there

is a very interesting deletion in the verse. Its complete meaning is: their husbands have more (or a better) right to them than another proposer, and this right can be utilized by taking them back and revoking the divorce during the period of waiting.

This right exists only in revocable divorce; and it is this circumstantial evidence which proves that the order is only about such divorcees and not about those who have been given an irrevocable divorce.

The verse explains the law concerning only those divorcees with whom marriage has been consummated, provided they are at the age of menstruation and are not pregnant. For others, there are other verses.

QUR'ĀN: *And they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is* (right) *a degree above them:*

''al-Ma'rūf'' (الْمَعْرُوفُ = variously translated in these verses as ''a just manner'', ''fairness'', a ''lawful manner'', ''usage'', a ''proper manner'' and ''proper deeds'') literally means ''known''. It refers to the things and usages established in society by the mutual dealings of its members, and recognized as just and good by general acceptance. This word has been repeatedly used in these verses — in twelve places. It shows how much importance Allāh attaches to fairness and justice in matters concerning divorce. *al-Ma'rūf* is a comprehensive word which covers the guidance of reason, the laws of religion, nobility of character and moral and ethical values.

As Islam has built its *Sharī'ah* on the foundation of nature, (*al-ma'rūf* = known) in its eyes is that custom which is known to the people when they walk on the straight path of nature and do not deviate from it.

The natural law of society says that all the members of society should be treated equally, they should have as much rights as they have obligations. At the same time it decrees that every individual's personal perfection and attributes must be recognized. The ruler's authority, the people's subordination, the scholar's knowledge, the illiterate person's ignorance, all must be weighed in the scale of their usefulness for, and effect on, society; and with that recognition everyone should be given his proper right.

The same principle was applied by Islam concerning the rights and obligations .of woman. It gave her as much right upon the husband as it ordained upon her for the husband. At the same time, it preserved her

rightful value and place in her union with the man; and in this area, Islam found that men have a right a degree above women.

It is clear from the above that the sentence, ‘‘and for the men is (a right) a degree above them’’, is like a clause which completes the principle sentence. The whole sentence means that women, or divorcees, are equal with men, but that men are a degree above them; therefore, Allāh has given the women as much right as is laid upon them, with the preservation of the authority of men over them.

We shall discuss this subject later on.

QUR'ĀN: *Divorce is twice; then keep* (them) *in fairness or let* (them) *go with kindness; and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them:*

‘‘al-Marrah’’ (المَرَّةُ) means once; it is derived from *al-murūr* (المُرُوْرُ = to pass). *ad-daf‘ah* (الدَّفْعَةُ), *al-karrah*(الكَرَّةُ) and *an-nuzlah* (النُّزْلَةُ) have the same meaning. *at-tasrīḥ* (التَّسْرِيْحُ) means to send forth the cattle to pasture. *as-sarḥ* (السَّرْحُ) is a tree, the fruit of which is eaten by the camel. The Arabs say *sarraḥtu 'l-ibal* (سَرَّحْتُ الابَلَ = I let loose the camel to feed on *sarḥ*). *at-tasrīḥ* is derived from the same root, and is used in this verse as a metaphor for releasing the divorced woman by not taking her back during the waiting period.

‘‘Divorce is twice’’: The divorce referred to here is the revocable divorce. That is why it has been followed by the words, ‘‘then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness’’. The third divorce, after these two, is mentioned in verse 2:230, which says: *So if he divorces her, she shall not be lawful to him until she marries another husband.*

To let them go with kindness means to let them go free by not revoking the divorce. They are either to be retained in fairness *bi-ma‘rūfin* (بِمَعْرُوْفٍ) or to be freed with kindness *‘‘bi iḥsānin’’* (بِإِحْسَانٍ). The difference between these expressions is important. Retaining the divorcee by revoking the divorce could be done with a bad intention, to injure and harm her. For example, a man divorces his wife, then waits until she nearly completes the waiting period and then he revokes the divorce and takes her back; then again he divorces her and the procedure is repeated. Such things could be done to mentally torture the woman; and it is unjust, unfair and cruel;the *sharī‘ah* of Islam dislike such behaviour. The revocation which is commendable in this religion is the one carried out for, and based on reconciliation, at which there is hope for the good companionship and love

which Allāh has created between husband and wife.

In the same way, letting her go could be done in an ugly manner; for example, quarrelling with her, showing rage and anger, and demonstrating a spirit of revenge. Such behaviour is not allowed in Islam. The *sharī'ah* says that this ''letting her go'' should be done in a manner recognized as noble by society and accepted as lawful by religion. It is this ''fair dealing'' which has been mentioned in the coming verse (*then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness* 2:231). But the verse under discussion goes a step further and commands the man, if he wishes to let her go, to do so ''with kindness''. The expression has been changed to prepare minds for the next rule: ''and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them''.

Obviously, the words ''in fairness'' and ''with kindness'' were necessary to prevent unscrupulous persons from misusing the law and defeating its purpose by following its letter but not its spirit. The real aim of the rule or revocation of divorce is to facilitate reconciliation. Therefore, it was necessary to ordain that it should be done ''in fairness'', not to inflict any harm up-on the woman. Allāh says in a coming verse: ''and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limits''. Likewise, the purpose of the ordinance to ''let her go'' is to safeguard her rights, so that the man does not take back all or part of the dowry given to her. For this purpose the word, ''in fairness'' was not sufficient, because some societies might not think it bad to take back the dowry, in whole or part, at the time of divorce. Therefore, the expression was changed to ''with kindness''. Now it paves the way for the next sentence, ''and it is not lawful . . . '', and compensates to some degree the loss that the woman suffers in the ruination of her family life and the breaking of the marriage-tie.

QUR'ĀN: *Unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh:* ''Both fear'' means both have an overriding opinion that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh. ''Limits of Allāh'' are His commands and prohibitions, the things prohibited or made obligatory by Him.

The situation mentioned in this verse appears when their mentalities, characters and manners are opposed to each other, and thus hate becomes the predominant factor in their relation-ship.

QUR'ĀN: *Then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh, then there is no blame on them for what she gives up* (to become free thereby): The change from the dual for *''khāfā''* (خَافَا = both feared) of the previous sentence to the plural *''khiftum''* (خِفْتُمْ = you — three or more — feared) here indicates that the fear, suspicion or opinion should be a reasonable one, recognized as such by common people. Doubts based on evil suggestions, infatuations or hypochondria will not do. That is also the reason why the whole phrase, ''that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh'', has been repeated. If a pronoun were used (i.e., if you fear 'it') there would be a chance that the couple's unreasonable doubts and suspicions would become the basis of this rule. This repetition has removed the chance of such a misunderstanding.

''There is no blame on them'': Before that, the husband was prohibited from taking any part of what he had given the wife. It means that the wife, on her part, was prohibited from giving him anything back, because if she gave him anything while he was not allowed to take it, she would be cooperating with him in a sin and transgression. Now, this verse gives an exception to that general rule: In the *al-khul'* (الخُلْعُ) form of divorce they are allowed to agree on an amount which the wife pays to the husband to get herself free. In this situation, there is no blame on the husband for taking it, nor on the wife in giving it. Hence the expression, ''there is no blame on them''.

QUR'ĀN: *These are the limits of Allāh, so do not exceed them, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allāh then these it is that are the unjust:*

''These'' is the demonstrative pronoun, pointing to the above-mentioned laws. These are matters of social legislation coupled with ethical teachings and other academic subjects.

It may be inferred from these verses that one should not try to separate legislative rules from moral principles. It is wrong to stick to the letter of the law, neglecting the spirit behind it. This sanctimoniousness defeats the purpose of the *sharī'ah*, negates the aims of religion and changes the bliss of life into misery. Islam is a religion of deeds, not of words; a *sharī'ah* of action, not of dogma. The Muslims have only reached this level of retrogression and backwardness, because their whole attention was fixed on the body of the law, and they completely forgot that there was also a soul and spirit inside that body. The coming verse: ''and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self '',

proves this assertion of ours.

This verse frequently changes the pronouns from plural to singular and from second person to third person and then returns to the original form. This style helps to hold the attention of the audience, and the variation of style refreshes the mind.

QUR'ĀN: *So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband . . . clear for a people who know:*

This verse promulgates the law of the third divorce. If after the two divorces and returns mentioned above, he divorces her a third time, she shall be prohibited to him until she marries another husband.

It is the wife herself who is said to be prohibited, while prohibition applies to marrying her as well as to cohabiting with her. This mode of expression has been used because ''she is prohibited'' implies both meanings; and, accordingly, ''until she marries another husband'' also implies marriage followed by cohabitation. Then if he, that is, the second husband, divorces her there is no blame on them both, that is, the woman and her first husband, if they return to each other, that is, by means of a fresh marriage, after reconciliation and mutual consent. The verb used is *''yatarāja'ā''* (يَتَرَاجَعَا) which means, ''both return to each other''; it is not the return or revocation after the first two divorces over which the husband has the right and which the women cannot refuse. This mutual return should be effected if they both think that they can keep within the limits of Allāh. The words ''limits of Allāh'' have again been repeated in the final sentences because these are other than those mentioned earlier.

This verse is a miracle of brevity and conciseness. Such a short verse contains fourteen pronouns all referring to different things; and although they are all near each other there is no ambiguity in the meaning, nor any difficulty in its understanding.

This verse and the two before it contain numerous common nouns and many metaphors without any adverse effect on their eloquence and elocution. For example, the phrase *''fa imsākun bima'rūfin au tasrīhūn bi iḥsānin''* (فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِيْحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ = than keeping them in fairness or letting them go with kindness) contains four common nouns coming one after other. Also, there are the following metaphorical expressions:

''What you have given them'':	Dowry.
''If you fear'':	If you have reasonable

	ground to believe.
‘‘What she gives up’’:	The redemption paid in *al-khul‘.*
‘‘So if he divorces her’’:	The third divorce.
‘‘She shall not be lawful to him’’:	He is prohibited to marry her again and cohabit with her.
‘‘Until she marries another husband’’:	Until she marries and cohabits with him. (N.B. the politeness of the Qur’ān).
‘‘If they return’’:	If they marry again.

Then there is the contrast between ‘‘keep’’ and ‘‘let go’’, and between ‘‘both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh’’ and ‘‘both think that they can keep within the limits of Allāh’’. Look also at the variation of style in ‘‘so do not exceed them’’ and ‘‘whoever exceeds them’’.

QUR’ĀN: *And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time, then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness, and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limit :*

‘‘They reach their prescribed time’’: When their prescribed time is about to expire. The verb *al-bulūgh*(البُلُوغ = to reach) is used not only for arriving at the destination, but also for coming near it. The reason of our opting for this meaning is clear from the next words, ‘‘then either retain them in fairness or set them free with fairness’’. The husband has neither of these options when her prescribed period has expired.

The words, ‘‘and do not retain them for injury, so that you exceed the limit’’, forbid retaining her with the intention of injuring her. A preceding verse had already prohibited taking back ‘‘any part of what you have given them’’ when one decides to let them go free. The only exception is *al-khul‘* (الخُلْع) .

QUR’ĀN: *And whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own self, and do not take Allāh’s signs for a mockery;*

It describes the reason why retaining the woman with the intention of causing her harm is prohibited. Marriage completes the bliss of life. This bliss cannot be achieved unless both husband and wife are happy with each other, and complement each other to attain a natural perfection.

Dovorce disturbs that harmony; and revocation is an attempt to mend that damage, to join after separation and to unite after coming apart. How can this purpose be attained if he retains her so as to inflict harm upon her? The two purposes are diametrically opposed. Anyone who resorts to such ugly behaviour is unjust to his own soul, because he drives it away from the straight path to which human nature leads. Obviously, he treats the signs of Allāh as a joke. Allāh has not ordained a soulless *sharī'ah* concerned only with the body of deeds, like giving, taking, keeping, letting go, etc. In fact, all these rules have been made for the common weal, to make up the deficiencies of society, and to perfect the bliss of human life. Then Allāh combined these rules with good ethics to develop the psyche, and cleanse the soul. All the laws of Islam are finely meshed with fundamental knowledge, like the Oneness of God, and the Mastership of the Prophet and the Imāms etc. If anyone confines his religion to the external rules and throws things out, he surely has taken the commandments and signs of Allāh as a mockery.

QUR'ĀN: *And remember the favour of Allāh upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom . . . the Knower of all things :*

''The favour of Allāh'': The grace bestowed in the form of religion, or the reality of religion, that is, the blessings one gets after following the Divine Commandments, an example of which is the happy life one lives when husband and wife love and respect each other and when there is harmony in domestic life. Allāh calls the blessings of the religion His favour. For example: *This day I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My favour on you . . .* (5:3); . . . *so that He may complete His favour on you . . .* (5:6); . . . *so by His favour you became brethren . . .* (3:103).

Accordingly, the next words, ''and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby'', would be a description of that favour; and the Book and the Wisdom would refer to the body and soul of the *sharī'ah* respectively — to its commandments and their philosophy.

Also, the favour may be taken to refer to all the Divine Graces — creative and otherwise. In this case, the verse would mean: Remember the mystery of your life, and think how it has been made into a perfect unit, and how the creative forces have established the wonderful harmony

between husband and wife. Then heed to the admonition of Allāh which He has addressed to you in the form of the commandments of *sharī'ah ,* and to their philosophy. If you ponder upon these matters you may hope to advance on to the road of blessings and bliss and you will not carelessly ruin the perfection of your life; and fear Allāh and remember that He knows every thing; your appearance, therefore, should not differ from the depths of your reality. In short, you should not try to defeat the purpose of the law by apparently following the letter of the law.

QUR'ĀN: *And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term* (of waitng), *then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner:* Apparently the order in ''do not prevent them'' is addressed to guardians and other relatives against whose wishes the women cannot usually go. ''Their husbans'' means the husbands who had given them divorce. The verse forbids guardians and other relatives from preventing the woman from re-marrying her husband if, after the expiry of the waiting period, both are reconciled to each other, and wish to re-establish the marriage-tie. It often happens that the relatives of the woman do not wish her to establish such a union again with the same husband, as they hate and dislike him because he divorced her in the first place. This verse says that they should not allow such feelings to become a hindrance in the path of such a reunion.

This verse does not prove in any way that marriage is not lawful without the permission of guardian:

First: because, even if it does not prove that guardianship has no effect on marriage, it surely does not prove that it has any such effect.

Second: There is no reason to say that the command, ''do not prevent'', is addressed to guardians only. Obviously, it is a general command addressed to all the relatives whose advice or pressure may create difficulty in such a re-marriage. Also, the order, apparently, is of an advisory nature, to draw the attention of the relatives to the benefits and gains which may accrue as a result of her re-marrying the same husband. That is why it has been recommended by the words, ''this is more profitable and purer for you ''.

A commentator has said that the command, ''do not prevent'', is addressed to the husbands who give the divorce, and it forbids them to hide for some time the news of the divorce from the women so that they

have to start their ‘‘period of waiting’’ late on receiving the news, and thus are prevented from entering into marriage early. Accordingly, the meaning would be like this: ‘‘And when you have divorced the women, (O husbands!) and they have ended their term of waiting, then do not prevent them from marrying (other men who would be) their husbands.’’ But this interpretation does not conform with the words of the verse. If that were the purpose of the verse, it should have said, ‘do not prevent them from marrying’ or ‘from taking other husbands’. It would not have said, ‘‘their husbands’’. (Also, the verse says that they have already completed their period of waiting; so where is the question of unnecessarily prolonging the period of waiting?)

‘‘Fa-balaghna ajalahunna’’(فَبَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ) literally means ‘and they have reached their term’. But it means ending their term, as we have written in the translation. If the period of waiting had not ended, no guardian or relative could prevent her return to the husband: ‘‘and their husbands have a better right to take them back in the meanwhile’’. Moreover, in that case Allāh would have said, ‘‘do not prevent them from returning’’ not ‘‘from marrying’’.

QUR’ĀN: *With this is admonished whosoever among you believes in Allāh and the last day;* It is exactly the same admonition as the one in verse 2:228, ‘‘it is not lawful for them that they should conceal what Allāh has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allāh and the last day’’. These two commands have been tied especially with the proviso of belief in Allāh and the last day, because it is the belief of *at-tawḥīd* (اَلتَّوْحِيْدُ = Monotheism, Oneness of God); and the religion of Monotheism encourages unity, not disunity; togetherness, not separation.

In these sentences, Allāh has first used the singular pronoun (is admonished whosoever), then the plural (among you,) again the singular (believe in . . .), then again He returns to the plural (for you). Basically, the verse is addressed to the Apostle of Allāh together with his *ummah;* therefore plural pronouns are quite in order. Yet, sometimes the talk is addressed to the Apostle only, because he is the original recepient of the revelation, and others are addressed only through him. This happens mostly in those sentences in which no law or command is promulgated. So far as those verses are concerned which bring any law or command, almost all of them are in the plural form. This style alternatively widens the circle, then shortens it, then again widens it. This variation holds the

attention of the audience and keeps them alert.

QUR'ĀN: *This is more profitable and purer for you: ''Azkā''* (أَزْكي) is derived from *az-zakāh* (الزَّكوة) which means 'good and pleasant growth'; therefore, it has been translated here as 'more profitable'. Purity has been explained earlier. The demonstrative pronoun, ''this'', refers either to not preventing them from re-marrying their previous husbands, or to such re-marriage itself. The result in both cases is the same. Such a re-marriage would create harmony in place of discord and would mend broken relationships. This would strengthen the feeling of unity and accord, from which would sprout healthy religious virtues. Such a re-marriage would augment the women's virtues of chastity and modesty, and would put a protective cover on their shame. Also, it would be purer for their souls because it would prevent them from thinking about other men when searching for the next husband.

Islam is the religion of *az-zakāh* (good growth, purification), *at-ṭahārah* (الطَّهَارَةُ = cleanliness) and knowledge. Allāh says: . . . *reciting to them his communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom* . . . (3:164); . . . *but He intends to purify you* . . . (5:7).

QUR'ĀN: *And Allāh knows while you do not know:* that is, except what He teaches you, as He says: . . . *and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom* (3:164); . . . *and they cannot comprehend any thing out of His knowledge except what He pleases* . . . (2:255). There is no conflict between this verse and the preceding one, ''. . . which He makes clear for a people who know'', as it means, 'who know by the teaching of Allāh'.

QUR'ĀN: And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling: The words used in this verse are ''al-wālidāt'' (الوَالِدَاتُ = those who give birth to) and *''mawlūdun lahu''* (مَوْلُوْدٌ لَهُ = he to whom the child is born). The more common words *al-umm* (الأمُّ = mother) and *al-ab* (الأبُ = father) have not been used, because *al-umm* is more general than *al-wālidah* (الوَالِدَةُ) — the grandmother, aunt and wet-nurse are also called *al-umm* (mother), but only the woman who gives birth to the child may be called its *al-wālidah.* Likewise, *al-ab* is more general than *al-wālad* (الوَالِدُ = he from whose seed the child is born); and *al-ibn* (الابْنُ = son) is more general than *al-walad* (الوَلَدُ = the born child) The rule prescribed in this verse concerns especially the born child and the woman who bore it and

the man to whom it was born. The verse has discarded even the word *al-wālid* (father) and has used a longer word *mawlūdun lahu* (he to whom the child is born) because this new word gives in a nut-shell the reason of this rule. As the child is born to the father and is attached to him in most affairs the father is obliged to bear the full responsibility for it, feeding and clothing it, care of it and bringing it up. This includes feeding and clothing the child's mother, who feeds it from her breast. On the other hand, the mother is obliged not to harm the father of the child, because it is he who is ultimately responsible for that child, born of her womb.

A strange interpretation has been written by one commentator. He says: ''Allāh used the word 'he for whom the child is born' , instead of 'father' , to show that mothers are only a means of bearing children for fathers, but that children actually belong to fathers, and that is why, at the time of mentioning parentage, only the names of the fathers are shown, not those of the mothers. And al-Ma'mūn al-Rashīd has said in a couplet :'And surely, the mothers of the people are but receptacles, where the seeds are deposited, and the sons are of the fathers only.' ''

The poor fellow forgot that this very verse says in the beginning *''awlādahunna''* (أَوْلاَدَهُنَّ = their, that is, the mothers' children): and again it says, *''bi waladihā''* (بِوَلَدِهَا = her child). More amusing is his attempt to argue on the strength of the poetry of al-Ma'mūn. al-Ma'mūn and his ilk are too worthless to have their words quoted in an explanation of the Qur'ān. Many men of literature get confused between different disciplines; they are unable to distinguish literature from legislation, or social laws from the decrees of creation. They, therefore, offer evidence to solve a social problem or a mystery of creation.

In fact, the child belongs to both the father and mother as far as creation is concerned. But in social affairs, various nations follow various systems: in matriarchies, the child is attached to the mother; in patriarchies, to the father. This verse confirms this second system by referring to the father as "he to whom the child is born''.

''al-Irḍā' '' (الإرْضَاعُ = suckling) is on the paradigm of *al-if'āl* (الإفْعَالُ) from *ar-riḍā'ah* (الرِّضَاعَةُ) and *ar-raḍa'* (الرَّضَعُ); both of which mean 'to suck milk from the breast'.

''al-Ḥawl'' (الحَوْلُ) is ''year''. Its literal meaning is to turn, to change. The year is given this name because it turns and changes. ''Two complete years'': As the year is made up of many parts (e.g.360 days),

the word sometimes is used for even an incomplete period. If one stays in a place for, let us say, eleven months, he often says that he stayed there for a year. This is why the adjective, ‘‘complete’’, has been used to show that two whole years are intended here.

‘‘For him who desires to make complete the time of suckling’’: It proves that the custody (guardianship) and suckling of the child is a right of the divorced mother, and is left to her discretion. Also deciding on the end of the prescribed period is her right. If she wishes to suckle the child for two complete years, she may do so: and if she does not want so, it is at her discretion. The husband has no say in it except when the divorced wife agrees to it by mutual counsel, as is described in the words, ‘‘if both desire weaning by mutual consent and counsel’’.

QUR’ĀN: *And their maintenance and their clothing must be borne by the father according to the usage; no soul shall have imposed upon it a duty but to the extent of its capacity:*

Allāh has prescribed the maintenance and clothing of the mother, according to the level of *al-ma‘rūf* (المَعْرُوْفُ = known, usual), that is, as is generally known and accepted in families of that status. The reason for this rule is given in the next sentence that Allāh does not impose any duty beyond the capacity of His servants.

Upon this general and basic principle are based two rules mentioned after it: (1) The right of the woman concerning the custody and suckling of the child, and other related rules. The husband has no right to come between the child and its mother, by not allowing her to keep the child in her custody, or by preventing her from seeing it and so on. The rights of the mother must be accorded to her; otherwise, it will injure and harm her and put her under an unjustified mental and emotional strain. (2) On her part, the woman is forbidden to injure and harm the husband, for example, by not allowing him to see the child.

The above two rules are ordained in the words, ‘‘neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child’’. Why did Allāh not use a pronoun? Instead of saying, ‘‘on account of his child’’, it could be said, ‘‘on account of him’’. But a pronoun in this place would have created an apparent contradiction. The sentence mentions the father as, ‘‘he to whom the child is born’’. The pronoun ‘‘him’’ would have referred to ‘‘her child’’ in the preceding sentence. So the purport of the supposed sentence would have been: nor

shall he to whom the child is born be made to suffer on account of ‘‘her’’ child!

But the sentence in its present form does not give room for such a contradiction. Not only that; the actual style recognizes factors of creation as well as social legislation: it recognizes that in creation, the child belongs to both parents, and, therefore, it is referred to as ‘‘her child’’ and ‘‘his child’’; then it shows that in social laws, it belongs to the father, who is, thus, referred to as the one to whom the child is born.

QUR’ĀN: *And a similar duty* (devolves) *on the* (father’s) *heir:* The duty imposed upon the father regarding the maintenance and clothing of the suckling mother devolves, if he dies, on his heir.

Some other meanings have been written for this verse which are not in conformity with its apparent meaning; we do not intend to quote them here. What we have written is according to the traditions narrated from the Imāms of *Ahlu’l-bayt* (a.s.), and is also in accord with the apparent meaning of the verse.

QUR’ĀN: *Then if both desire weaning by mutual consent. . . according to usage:* This is an offshoot of the right of the mother and of the avoidance of harm to either party. The upbringing and suckling of the child is not an obligation on her; it is a right of hers and she may waive her right if she so wishes. Therefore, it is perfectly right if the parents agree by mutual counsel to wean the child before the completion of the two years. Also, the father may engage another wet-nurse for the child, if the mother returns the child to him and refuses to suckle it; or if she is sick or has not got enough milk or for any other reason. But it is incumbent upon him to give the wet-nurse her rightful dues without infringing any of her rights, as Allāh says: ‘‘and if you wish to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised according to usage’’.

QUR’ĀN: *And fear Allāh and know that Allāh sees what you do:* It is an order to fear Allāh and to be careful of one's obligations towards Him, which in present context means to obey these orders and to show fairness in their implementation. As these matters may be seen and observed, Allāh reminds man to know that He sees what man does. Compare it with the ending of the previous verse which forbids husbands to retain their wives with the intention of inflicting harm upon them, and then reminds them that Allāh knows every thing. As the intention cannot be ‘‘seen’’,

man was reminded there that Allāh ‘‘knows’’ every thing, and even his intention is not hidden from Him.

QUR’ĀN: *And* (as for) *those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten* (days):

‘‘at-Tawaffī’’ (التَّوَفِّي) means to cause to die. It is said *tawaffāhu ’llāh* (تَوَفَّاهُ آللّٰهُ) when Allāh gave him death, and the dead man is called *al-mutawaffā* (المُتَوَفَّي is one who is given death).

‘‘Yadharūn’’ (يَذَرُوْنَ) like *yad‘ūn* (يَدْعُوْنَ) means ‘‘they leave’’, or ‘‘they shall leave’’. These two verbs have no past tense.

‘‘‘Ashran’’ (عَشْرًا = ten) here means ten days. ‘Days’ was deleted as the meaning was clear.

QUR’ĀN: *Then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner:*

‘‘Bulūghu’l-ajal’’ (بُلُوْغُ الْاَجَلُ = reaching the term) means completing the waiting period of death, prescribed above. ‘‘There is no blame on you . . .’’ is a way of expressing the widows’ full authority on their own affairs; if they wish to enter into marriage again, they are free to do so, and no relative of theirs, or of their deceased husbands, has any right to interfere. The verse puts a stop to the foolish custom of some societies which, owing to ignorance, blind prejudice, miserliness or envy, do not like widows to remarry. It says that widows have a right to do so, and that right is recognized by the *sharī‘ah;* no one has any power to forbid a lawful action.

Various nations had various customs regarding the widow. Some, like the Hindus, burnt her alive with the dead husband; others, like many ancient tribes in Africa and elsewhere, buried her alive with the husband’s body; some like the ancient Christians, did not allow her to marry again and she had to remain single until death released her from this chain; some others, like the Arabs of the pre-Islamic days, kept her secluded for one year, or, like some advanced societies of nowadays, for nine months; there are others who say that the deceased husband has a right upon the widow which prevents her from re-marrying for a certain period — without fixing that time. All these customs and traditions are based on the assumption that marriage basically joins two lives together, and is the manifestation of love and affection; and that this love has a sanctity which must be respected. This respect is binding on both the parties, and whoever dies first, the surviving spouse must show grace,

dignity and decorum as a natural courtesy towards his or her departed partner in life. But this courtesy is more binding on the woman, because she is expected to be a model of modesty and chastity and has to protect herself from other men's eyes. It is not in keeping with her dignity to appear as cheap merchandise handled by various admirers one after another. The above-mentioned customs and traditions are based on this belief.

Islam has prescribed a term of nearly a third of a year for this waiting.

QUR'ĀN: *And Allāh is aware of what you do:*

As the verse contained the rules of *al-'iddah* of death and the right of widows to remarry and as these legislations were about actions and were based on Divine wisdom, it was appropriate to remind the audience that Allāh knows all about their actions, and He knows best what should be allowed and what should be forbidden; therefore, widows have to wait in one instance and have freedom in the other.

QUR'ĀN: *And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of* (such) *women in marriage or keep* (the proposal) *concealed within your minds:*

''at-Ta'rīḍ'' (التَّعْرِيْضُ), translated here as speaking indirectly, is speaking obliquely in a way that the hearer understands the real aim which the speaker does not want to declare openly. The difference between speaking indirectly and metaphor is that in speaking indirectly the apparent meaning also remains valid and the indirect meaning is inferred from it. For example, the suitor says to the woman: ''I am a good companion, of generous nature.'' While the clear meaning also is valid, the purport of the talk is to let the woman know that if she married him she would be happy. But in metaphor the apparent meaning vacates its place for the metaphorical one. For example, one says about a brave man, ''I saw a lion''. Here real meaning of lion (the particular animal) is not valid at all.

''al-Khaṭb'' (الخَطْبُ) means speaking and reiterating. *''al-khiṭbah''* (الخِطْبَةُ) and *''al-khuṭbah''*(الخُطْبَةُ) both are derived from it. The former means proposing to a woman asking her hand in marriage. The suitor is called *al-khāṭib* (الخَاطِبُ plural: *al-khuṭṭāb* الخُطَّابُ); the latter means a lecture. The lecturer is called *al-khaṭīb* (الخَطِيْبُ plural: *al-khuṭabā'* الخُطَبَآءُ).

''al-Iknān'' (الاِكْنَانُ) is derived from *al-kann* (الكَنُّ), and both

mean 'to hide', 'to conceal'. But *al-iknān* is concealing an idea in the mind, as the verse says: ''or keep concealed within your mind''; and *al-kann* is hiding or covering something with, or in, a material thing like a cloth, a house, etc. Allāh says: *As if they were eggs carefully sheltered:* (37:49); *the like of the hidden pearls* (56:23).

The verse says that it is not improper to speak to such women indirectly, letting them know that you are interested in marrying them when they are free, or to hide this idea in your mind.

QUR'ĀN: *Allāh knows that you will mention them . . . in a proper manner:* It gives the reason of the above sentences. Mentioning such women in the context of marriage is a natural thing for you, and Allāh does not forbid a thing which is ingrained in your nature.

This is one of the rules which clearly show that Islam is based on the foundation of nature.

QUR'ĀN: *And do not resolve the marriage-tie until prescribed term is completed*

''al-'Azm'' (الْعَزْمُ = resolve, determination) is to set the heart on a work with firm intention of doing it, so that no weakness remains in the effect of that resolve, unless that resolve itself is cancelled. *''al-'Uqdah''* (الْعُقْدَةُ = knot, tie) is derived from *''al-'aqd''* (الْعَقْدُ) which means to tie. The verse likens the bond of marriage with the knot which joins two cords together so that they become one; thus the husband and wife become one by the marriage-tie.

The marriage-tie is connected in this verse with resolve and determination, which is a matter of the heart and mind. The verse thus indicates that the reality behind the marriage rite is something dependent on, and connected with, intention, faith and belief. Marriage is, in fact, a matter based on society's (or religion's) recognition, and has no existence outside common belief. It is the same as was described about ownership and other such matters under the verse 2:213. The verse, thus, contains an allegory and a metaphor.

''Hattā yablugha 'l-kitābu ajalahu'' (حَتَّي يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ اَجَلَهُ); *''al-kitāb''* (الْكِتَابُ) means 'written' that is, a prescribed rule, and it refers to the waiting imposed on the women who are in *al-'iddah.* Literally the phrase means, ''until the prescribed rule reaches (the end of) its duration''.

The verse thus means: Do not perform marriage with them until their

prescribed waiting period has been completed.

It is clear from this verse that the talk in this and the preceding verses is about those women who are in the waiting period, Therefore, the definite article ‘‘the women’’ refers not to all women but to the previously-mentioned group. That is why it has been translated, ‘‘. . . in the asking of (such) women in marriage . . .’’

QUR’ĀN: *And know that Allāh knows what is in your mind; therefore beware of Him, and know that Allāh is Forgiving, Forbearing:* By mentioning the Divine attributes of Knowledge, Forgiveness and Forbearance, Allāh warns the believers that the matters discussed in the two verses — proposing to women during their waiting period, and speaking to them obliquely about it, and giving them a promise in secret — are extremely perilous things; Allāh does not like them at all, although He has allowed what He has allowed.

QUR’ĀN: *There is no blame on you if you divorce the women while yet you have not touched them or appointed for them a dowry:* To touch allegorically, means to cohabit. *‘‘Aw tafriḍū lahunna farīḍatan’’* (اَوْ تَفْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً), literally means ‘or appointed for them a (prescribed) duty’, and it refers to fixing the dowry.

The verse means that it shall not be a hindrance in divorce if the marriage was not yet consummated, or if the dowry was yet to be fixed.

QUR’ĀN: *And make provision for them, on the wealthy according to his means, and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage:*

‘‘al-Mut‘ah’’ (المُتْعَةُ) and ‘‘*al-matā‘ ’’*(المَتَاعُ) is what may be used, or enjoyed. *‘‘matti‘uhunna’’* (مَتِّعُوْهُنَّ) means ‘give them usable, enjoyable goods or wealth’. The word, ‘‘a provision’ is the object of the verb, ‘‘make provision’’ ; between the verb and its object is placed the paranthetic clause, ‘‘on the wealthy . . . and on . . . to his means’’. *‘‘al-Mūsi‘ ’’* (المُوْسِعُ) is the active participle of *‘‘awsa‘a’’* (اَوْسَعَ = he became wealthy) This paradigm is reserved for transitive verbs. Perhaps, this verb was originally used with an object; gradually the object was omitted and the verb became intransitive.

The verse says: It is incumbent upon you, if you divorce a woman when the dowry was not yet fixed, to make for her a provision according to usage. And it should be according to the means of the husband.

Accordingly, she is entitled to get an amount similar to the dowry of

her equals like her mother, her sister, etc. But this order does not cover the case of a woman divorced before cohabitation, because her case is explained in the next verse.

QUR’ĀN: (this is) *a duty on the doers of good* (to others). Apparently the attribute of doing good to others is closely connected with this legislation. As ‘‘doing good to others’’ is not incumbent, it follows that the order given above should be a recommendation, not a compulsory law. But clear traditions of *Ahlu ’l-bayt* say that the order is compulsory and obligatory. Perhaps it may be inferred from this verse in this way: Allāh has earlier said, ‘‘Divorce is twice; then keep (them) in fairness or let (them) go with kindness’’. There the Arabic word, for which we have used ‘‘Kindness’’, is *al-iḥsān* (الاحْسَانُ), which in this verse has been translated as doing good to others. Anyhow, kindness and doing good is incumbent on those who let the women go, that is, those who give divorce. Therefore, the divorcers are obliged to be doers of good. And this verse orders the doers of good to make provision for the divorced women. In other words, it obliges the divorcers to make such provision. (And Allāh knows better).

QUR’ĀN: *And if you divorce them before you have touched them . . . that you should remit:*lf you divorce them before the consummation of marriage and a dowry was already fixed, then you are obliged to pay them half the prescribed amount. Of course, if the women themselves or their guardians remit this amount then the half also would be waived.

The husband may also be termed the ‘‘one in whose hand is the marriage-tie’’. Therefore, if he has already paid the full dowry and if he remits it, then it will not be necessary for the divorced wife to pay back to him half of that amount. And, in any case, remitting the due portion of the dowry is nearer to righteouness and piety. One who gives up his rightful dues (which he is entitled to, according to *sharī‘ah*) shall more easily and readily turn away from what is not lawful, and shun what is forbidden.

QUR’ĀN: *And do not forget generosity between you; surely Allāh sees what you do:*

‘‘al-faḍl’’ (الفَضْلُ = translated here as generosity) originally means to exceed, to surpass. The same is the meaning of *al-fuḍūl* (الفُضُوْلُ). But *al-faḍl* is used for excellence in virtue, nobility and merit, while *al-fuḍūl* is used for unwarranted excesses, like chattering and gossiping.

The verse exhorts the separated couple to do good and be generous to each other by forgoing their own rights and giving the other party more than its due.

The comment about ‘‘surely Allāh sees what you do’’ is similar to that given concerning the last sentence of the verse 2:234.

QUR’ĀN: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and. stand up truly obedient to Allāh:* ¸*‘‘Ḥāfiẓū’’* (حَافِظُوْا = maintain) is derived from *‘‘al-ḥifẓ’’* (الحِفْظ) which means to take hold of a thing and preserve it. Mostly it is used for retaining ideas and perceived pictures in the mind. The middle prayer is the prayer falling in the middle. The verse does not say which of the prayers is the middle one. It is explained in traditions which will be quoted later on.

‘‘Stand up for Allāh’’: The *‘‘L’’* (ل = for) shows the aim, that is, purely for the pleasure of Allāh. ‘‘Standing up’’ metaphorically means to start a work and be engaged in it.’’ *‘‘Qānitīn’’* (قَانِتِيْنَ) is derived from *‘‘al-qunūt’’* (القُنُوْتُ) which means obedience, submission, surrender. Allāh says: *All are obedient to Him’’* (2:116); *And whoever of you is obedient to Allāh and His Apostle* . . . (33:31).

The meaning of the verse in short is: Remain engaged in the obedience of Allāh, being submissive to Him, purely for His pleasure.

QUR’ĀN: *But if you are in danger. . . what you did not know:* The conjunctive *‘‘F’’* (ف = but) joining this sentence in the subjunctive mood with the previous verse shows that there was a deleted (but understood) conditional clause, therein: ‘‘Maintain, if you are not in danger’’. *‘‘ar-Rijāl’’* (الرِّجَالُ) is plural of *ar-rājil* (الرّاجِل = pedestrian), *‘‘ar-rukbān’’* (الرُّكْبَانُ) is plural of *ar-rākib* (الرَّاكِبُ = rider). This verse prescribes the rule of the prayer of danger.

‘‘F’’ implies that maintaining the prayer and attending to it regularly is a rule which can never be relaxed. If you are not in danger, then perform it as you have been taught ; but if there is any danger or risk, then do it in the best possible way, standing or walking on foot, or even riding. Then after the danger passes away and you are secure, perform it in the usual way, and remember Allāh as He has taught you what you did not know. *‘‘K’’* (ک = as) in ‘‘as He has taught you’’ is for analogy. ‘‘What you did not know’’ shows the magnitude of the favour of Allāh; for this reason, it points to all the things taught by Allāh, instead of mentioning only the teaching ,of the prayer.

The meaning of the sentence, thus, will be: So, remember Allāh with a remembrance equal to His favour in teaching you the obligatory prayer among other teachings concerning the rules of the religion.

QUR'ĀN: *And those of you who die and leave wives behind* (make) *a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for the year. . . .* ''Bequest'' in this sentence is an object; its verb ''bequeath'' is deleted because it is easily understood.

The definite article *al-* (اَلْ = the) in *''al-ḥawl''* (الحَوْلُ = the year) shows that the verse must have been revealed before the rule of *al-'iddah* of death (waiting for four months and ten days) was promulgated. The women in pre-Islamic days used to wait, after the death of their husbands, for a whole year. And this verse directs the husbands to bequeath for them enough property with which they might maintain themselves during that period of waiting, without turning them out of the house. It was their right, and they could demand it. But they could as well forgo that right and go away. In that case, there was no blame on the heirs of the deceased husband for what they did of proper deeds about themselves.

This verse is like verse 2:180: *Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty* (incumbent) *upon those who guard* (against evil).

Obviously, the verse under discussion was abrogated by the verses of *al-'iddah* of death and inheritance.

QUR'ĀN: *And for the divorced women* (too) *provision* (should be made) *according to usage;* (this is) *a duty on those who guard* (against evil): The command is in respect of all the divorcees. The proviso of piety, ''those who guard against evil'', implies that it is a recommendation, nor a compulsion.

QUR'ĀN: *Thus Allāh makes clear to you His signs, so that you may understand: ''al-'Aql''* (العَقْلُ) is ''to tie'',''to shackle''. Accordingly, the faculty of perception is called *al-'aql,* because it holds fast the perceived picture; the perceived idea or picture is also called *al-'aql,* as is the power by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and right and wrong. Its opposites, from various view-points, are insanity, idiocy, foolishness and ignorance.

The words used in the Qur'ān for the various facets of perception are

very many: nearly twenty. Their list, with their approximate meanings, is as follows:-

al-Yaqīn	(اليَقِينُ)	Conviction, Certitude
aẓ-Ẓann	(الظَّنُّ)	Weightier Supposition
al-Ḥisbān	(الحِسْبَانُ)	Reckoning, Consideration
ash-Shu'ūr	(الشُّعُوْرُ)	Sense
adh-Dhikr	(الذِّكْرُ)	Remembering
al-'Irfān	(العِرْفَانُ)	Knowledge, Recognition
al-Fahm	(الفَهْمُ)	Understanding
al-Fiqh	(الفِقْهُ)	Knowledge
ad-Dirāyah	(الدِّرَايةُ)	Comprehension
al-Fikr	(الفِكْرُ)	Thinking
ar-Ra'y	(الرَّأي)	Opinion
az-Za'm	(الزَّعْمُ)	Assumption
al-Ḥifẓ	(الحِفْظُ)	Preservation
al-Ḥikmah	(الحِكْمَةُ)	Wisdom
al-Khubrah	(الخُبْرَةُ)	Full Knowledge
ash-Shahādah	(الشَّهَادَةُ)	Witness
al-'aql	(العَقْلُ)	Intellect, Sense, Reason

To this list may be added:

al-Qawl	(القَوْلُ)	Saying, i.e., Opinion
al-Fatwā	(الفَتْوي)	Decree, Decision
al-Baṣīrah	(البَصِيرَةُ)	Insight

and other words.

al-Yaqīn (اليَقِينُ = conviction) : When the conviction is so strong that the mind does not entertain the opposite idea at all.

If an idea and its opposite both are equally balanced in mind, so that no side is heavier than the other, it is called *ash-shakk,* (الشَّكُّ) that is, doubt.

But if one side has more weight than the other, the weightier side is called *aẓ-ẓann,* and the lighter one *al-wahm* (الوَهْمُ), that is, fancy, illusion.

al-Ḥisbān (reckoning, consideration) is nearer to *aẓ-ẓann* in meaning. But its use in this meaning is allegorical, as is the case with *al-'add* (العَدُّ). Both words mean ''to count''. When it is said, ''He counted Zayd

among the braves'', it is implied that he thought Zayd to be brave.

ash-Shu'ūr (sense) is derived from *ash-sha'r* (الشَّعْرُ = hair) ;therefore implies a finer perception. It is mostly used for sensing the material things. Hence the five senses are called *al-mashā'ir* (المَشَاعِرُ) .

adh-Dhikr (remembering) is to recall the picture stored in the memory after its absence from the sense; or to prevent its absence from the senses.

al-'Irfān and *al-ma'rifah* (المَعْرِفَةُ), that is, knowledge, recognition, is conformity of the picture obtained in the mind with the ideas or pictures already stored in the memory. That is why it is said that *al-'irfān* is the knowledge after a previous knowledge.

al-Fahm (understanding) is the reaction of an outside factor by which a picture is created in the mind.

al-Fiqh (knowledge) is deep etching of the above-mentioned picture in the mind.

ad-Dirāyah (comprehension) is even deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the subject, so that even hidden and lessknown points become known and clear. That is why it is mostly used when the importance of the subject matter is to be shown. Allāh says: *The sure calamity! What is the sure calamity? And what would make you ''comprehend'' what the sure calamity is!* (69:1—3); *Surely We sent it down on the night of destiny. And what will make you comprehend what the night of destiny is?* (97:1—2)

al-Fikr (thinking) is the review of the known factors to discover the unknown.

ar-Ra'y (opinion) is the opinion reached at through thinking and consideration. Mostly it is used for ''practical knowledge'', that is, what should be done and what not; rather than for theoretical subjects like physical sciences.

Nearer to it in meaning are *al-baṣīrah* (discernment, insight); *al iftā'* (الافْتَآءُ = the giving of a decision) and *al-qawl* (saying).But the use of ''saying'' in meaning of view is metaphorical, putting an inseparable thing for its companion (as the saying necessarily shows the decided opinion of the sayer).

az-Za'm (assumption) indicates a picture in mind, whether it is a confirmed or a probable idea.

al-'Ilm (العِلْمُ = knowledge) is the comprehension which does not

allow the opposite.

al-Ḥifẓ (preservation) is to save the known picture protecting it from change and deterioration.

al-Ḥikmah (wisdom) is the knowledge which is confirmed and precise.

al-Khubrah (full knowledge): Full academic knowledge, so that the knowledgeable person perceives all the conclusions from the premises.

ash-Shahādah (witnessing) is to get the thing in specie, either through the five senses, or the internal perceptive powers like the feeling.

Apart from the last-mentioned five words, the meanings of all others are more or less related to matter, movement and change. Therefore, they are not attributed to Allāh. We do not say that He, for example, presumes, thinks, guesses or senses etc.

But the last five words are free from such defects in meanings. They do not have any shade of deficiency. They are therefore used for Him. He says: . . . *and Allāh knows what you do* (2:234); . . . *and Allāh knows every thing* (4:176); *and your Lord is the preserver of all things* (34:21); *and He is the Knower, the Wise* (12:83); *surely He is a witness over all things* (41:53).

Now we return to our original discussion. *al-'aql* is the faculty of perception which holds fast the perceived picture, according to the Creation of Allāh. It knows truth and falsity in theoretical matters, and good and evil and the benefit and harm in the practical field. First it recognizes itself, then it perceives the sensual phenomena through the five senses, then it turns to the inner feelings and through them becomes connected to the outside world — like will, love, hate, hope, fear and similar emotions and sentiments. Then it analyses the perceived ideas and pictures, and re-arranges them, generalizing and particularizing them. Then it forms an opinion in theoretical matters and decides its own course of action in practical ones. This, in short, is *al-'aql* that is, reason and its function.

But sometimes some forces overpower man by subdueing all other powers. For example, lust and anger subjugate all the other faculties, either vanquishing them completely or weakening them. Thus man deviates from the middle path, straying to excess or deficiency in his moral and ethical life. In short, reason does not function as it should normally do, even though it seems to work. It is like a judge who bases

his judgement on false testimonies or faked evidence. His judgement will be a perversity of justice, even though he does not mean to be unjust. He will be called a judge, but at the same time he will not be a judge. Likewise, when a man chooses his course of action on the basis of wrong premises, he is not working reasonably, even though this exercise is tolerantly given the name of ‘‘reason’’. It is because the man by such an exercise goes against the dictates of healthy nature and right path.

‘‘Reason’’, as defined by the divine representatives, is that which benefits a man in his religion, and leads him to the true knowledge and virtuous deeds. If it is not so, it is not ‘‘reason’’, even if it helps him in distinguishing between worldly good and bad affairs. Allāh says: *And they shall say: Had we but listened or pondered ‘‘na‘qil’’* (نَعْقِلُ) *we would not have been among the inmates of the burning fire* (67:10); *Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes which become blind, but blind become the hearts which are in the breasts* (22:46).

The two verses use the verb *al-‘aql* for the knowledge which man acquires on his own and the verb ‘‘to hear’’ for the perception acquired with the help of others, provided both are done through true natute. Allāh says: *And who forsakes the religion of Ibrahim but he who makes himself a fool. . .* (2:130). This verse, as explained earlier, is a contraposition of the tradition: *‘‘al-‘aql* (reason, wisdom) is that by which the Beneficent (Allāh) is worshipped . . . ’’

Now it is obvious that when Allāh uses the word *al-‘aql* it refers to the perception which a man gets when his nature is healthy and perfect. This explains the meaning of the words of the verse, ‘‘Thus Allāh makes clear to you His signs so that you may understand.’’ The clarifying creates knowledge and knowledge is the foundation of wisdom and understanding, as Allāh says: *And these examples, We set them forth for the people, and none understand them but the learned* (29:43).

TRADITIONS

There is a tradition in *as-Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd from Asmā’, daughter

of Yazīd ibn as-Sakan al-Anṣāriyyah, that she said: ''I was given divorce in the days of the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) and there was no waiting period for a divorce. When I was divorced, the (rule of) waiting period of divorce was revealed: *And the divorced women should keep themselves in waiting for three monthly courses.''* Thus, she was the first woman about whom the (rule of) waiting period for divorce was sent down.

And there is a tradition about this verse in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī from Zurārah that he said: ''I heard Rabī'ah ar-Rā'ī saying: 'In my opinion, *al-aqrā'* (الأقرآءُ = period) which Allāh has ordained in the Qur'ān is the period of purity between two menstruations, and not the menstruation itself.' '' Zurārah said: ''Then I came to Abū Ja'far (a.s.) and narrated to him what Rabī'ah had said. He (the Imām) said: 'But he did not say it by his own opinion; it has reached him from 'Alī (a.s.).' I said: 'May Allāh put your affairs right for you ! Was 'Alī (a. s.) saying so?' He said: 'Yes! He had said, ''Surely *al-qur'* (القُرْءُ) is *aṭ-ṭuhr* (الطُّهْرُ = the period of purity); the blood accumulates in that period and when the time comes it is expelled.'' ' I said: 'May Allāh put your affairs right for you! (What do you say) If a man divorces his wife in the period of purity, without cohabiting with her (in that period), in the presence of two just witnesses?' He said: 'When she enters into her third menstruation, her waiting period is finished and she becomes lawful for another husband . . .' ''

The author says: This meaning is narrated from him (the Imām) from various chains. Zurārah asked ''whether 'Alī (a.s.) was saying so?'' because it is generally believed by the Sunnīs that 'Alī (a.s.) said that the word meant the period of menstruation and not of purity. (It is reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from ash-Shāfi'ī, 'Abdu 'r-Razzāq, 'Abd ibn Ḥamīd and al-Bayhaqī from 'Alī [a.s.] that he said: ''It is allowed to her husband to return to her until she bathes from the third menstruation, and [then] she becomes lawful to [another] husband.) But the Imāms of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* deny it; and attribute to him the word that *al-aqrā'* is the period of purity, not menstruation, as was mentioned in the above tradition. This opinion has been attributed to other companions also, like Zayd ibn Thābit, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, and 'Ā'ishah; and it has been narrated from all of them.

There is in *Majma'u 'l-bayān* from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) explaining the

words of Allāh: *And it is not lawful for them . . . conceal what Allāh has created in their wombs,* that he said: ‘‘Pregnancy and menstruation.’’

It is written in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī: ‘‘Surely Allāh has delegated to women (the information of) three things: purity, menstruation and pregnancy.’’

It is written in the same book about the words of Allāh: *And for the men is* (right) *a degree above them,* that the Imām said: ‘‘The right of men over women is superior to the right of women over men.’’

The author says: This is not contradictory with their equality in the ordainment of rights.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī about the verse: *Divorce is twice; then keep* (them) *in fairness or let* (them) *go in kindness,* from Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) that he said: ‘‘Verily Allāh says: *‘Divorce is . . . go in kindness’*; and letting them go in kindness is the third divorce.’’

And there is a tradition in *at-Tahdhīb* from Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) that he said: ‘‘Divorce, according to the *sunnah*, is that he divorces her once, that is, in her period of purity, without cohabiting (in that period), in the presence of two just witnesses, then leaves her until her period of waiting expires. Thus she becomes completely separated from him. Then he may become one of the suitors, she may marry him is she so wishes; and not, if not. And if he wants to revoke the divorce, he should keep witnesses to return her (to himself) before the expiry of her period of waiting; and in this case, she will remain with him after that divorce . . .’’

Ḥasan ibn Faḍḍāl is reported in *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu ’l-faqīh* as saying: ‘‘I asked ar-Riḍā (a.s.) of the reason why the woman who is divorced (twice and returned twice) during her period of waiting, is not lawful to her husband until she marries another husband. He (the Imām) said: ‘Surely Allāh allowed him to give divorce twice, as He said: *Divorce is twice; then keep* (them) *in fairness or let* (them) *go in kindness,* that is, in the third divorce. And because he entered into what Allāh dislikes, that is, divorce, He prohibited her to him, so that she would not be lawful for him until she marries a husband other than him; so that people should not treat divorce lightly and the women should not be harmed . . .’ ’’

The author says: It is the *madhhab* of *Ahlu 'l-bayt,* as narrated by the Shī'ite sources, that divorce with one word or in one sitting is not but only one divorce, even if he said: ''I divorce thee three divorces''. But the Sunnīs have contradictory traditions about it. Some show that it would be only one divorce, others say that it would be three and some narrate it from 'Alī and Ja'far ibn Muḥammad (aṣ-Ṣādiq - a.s.). But it appears from some Sunnī traditions, narrated by Muslim, an-Nasā'ī, Abū Dāwūd (in their *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ*) and others that it was 'Umar who, two or three years after receiving the caliphate, validated pronouncement of three divorces with one word. It is reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*: 'Abdu 'r-Razzāq, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī, al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī have narrated from Ibn 'Abbās that he said: ''It was (the system of) divorce during the days of the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) and Abū Bakr and two years during the caliphate of 'Umar that three divorces (i.e., in one sitting) were (counted as) one. Then 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: 'Surely the people are making haste in a matter in which they were given time. Therefore, (it would be good) if we sanction it.' He then validated it.''

And it is reported in *as-Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd from Ibn 'Abbās that he said: '' 'Abd Yazīd Abū Rukānah divorced Umm Rukānah and married a woman from the tribe of Muzīnah. Then she (i.e., the new wife) came to the Prophet and said: 'He does not satisfy me even as much as this hair. (She said it taking out a hair from her head.) Therefore, separate between him and me.' On hearing it the Prophet felt enraged and called Rukānah and his brother, and asked his companions: 'Do you see that this resembles him (Abū Rukānah) in this and this, and that in this and this?' They said: 'Yes' Then the Prophet told 'Abd Yazīd: 'Give her divorce.' He did so. Then (the Prophet) said: 'Take back your wife, Umm Rukānah.' He said: 'I have given her three divorces, O Messenger of Allāh!' The Prophet said: 'I know. Yet you take her back.' '' Then he recited, *O Prophet! when you divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed time. . .* (65:1).

It is reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from al-Bayhaqī from Ibn 'Abbās that he said: ''Rukānah divorced a woman three times in one sitting; then he grieved for her. So, the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) asked him : 'How did you divorce her?' He said: 'I divorce her thrice in one sitting.' The Messenger of Allāh said: 'Then take her back if you so

wish.' So he took her back.'' Therefore, Ibn 'Abbās was of the opinion that the divorce can be given (once) only in every period of cleanliness; and that it is the *sunnah* which Allāh has ordered, ''Divorce them for their prescribed period.''

The author says: This meaning is narrated in other traditions also. So far as the ''sanction'' given by 'Umar is concerned, the arguments against it are like those described in the subject of *mut'atu 'l-ḥajj.*

The word of Allāh, ''Divorce is twice'', has been offered as a proof that three divorces in one word (e.g., I give thee three divorces, or, I divorce thee thrice) are not effective at all. The words 'twice' and 'thrice' are not used for a thing effected by one word, and all Muslims accept this principle when they talk about *al-li 'ān* (اللِّعَانُ = mutual imprecation).

The author of *Majma'u 'l-bayān* says about the word of Allāh, ''or let (them) go with kindness'': Two interpretations have come down to us of this phrase; first, that it is the third divorce, second, that the woman should be left to complete her period of waiting, so that she becomes completely free of the marriage-bond. It is narrated from as-Suddī and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk; and the same meaning is reported from al-Bāqir and aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.).

The author says: As you see, there is a difference in the traditions about the meaning of this phrase.

It is reported in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī about the words of Allāh, ''and it is not lawful for you to take any part of what you have given them unless both fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh; then if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of Allāh, there is no blame on them for what she gives up to become free thereby:'' aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''The *khul'* (Redemption) is not effected except when the woman tells her husband, 'I shall not fulfil for you your vow' and 'I will surely go out without your permission' and 'I will surely get other man to sleep in your bed' and 'I will not take the obligatory bath of *al-janābah* on your account' (i.e., I will not sleep with you); or she says, 'I will not obey any order of yours or let you give me divorce'. When she says such things, then it is allowed to him to take back from her all that he had given her and all that he can get from her which she gives him. When both are agreed on it, he will divorce her in her period of cleanliness in the presence of the witnesses. Thus (on expiry of her

waiting period) she separates from him with one divorce; and now he may be one of those who want to marry her. And if she so wishes, she may marry him again, and if she so wishes, she may reject him. If both remarry, she will be with him, and yet two more divorces (like this) may be given to her. And he should make a condition with her (when he takes ransom from her for giving her divorce), like that made in case of *al-mubārāt* (Mutual Freeing), that 'if you take back anything from this ransom given me by you, then I have more right on you' (i.e., the divorce will become a revocable one).''

And he (the Imām) said: ''There is no *al-khul'*, *al-mubārāt* or *at-takhyīr* (option) except in a period of cleanliness without cohabitation (in that period) taking as witnesses two just men. And if a woman who obtains divorce as *al-khul'*, marries another husband and then he (also) divorces her, it is lawful for the first husband to marry her.''

And he said : ''The husband has no right to revoke the divorce in case of *al-khul'* and *al-mubārāt,* excep when the woman changes her decision (and agrees to return to him) ; then he shall return to her whatever he took from her (and then may revoke the divorce).''

It is reported in *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh* from al-Bāqir (a.s.) that he said: ''When the woman said to her husband the sentence, 'I shall not obey any order of yours', whether she elaborates it or not, it becomes lawful to him to take (ransom) from her (to give her *al-khul'*) and he has no right to get her back (i.e., to revoke the divorce).''

It is written in *al-Durru 'l-manthūr:* Aḥmad has narrated from Sahl ibn Abī Ḥathmah that he said: ''Ḥabībah bint Sahl was married to Thābit ibn Qays ibn Shammās; but she disliked him; he was an ugly man. So she came and said: 'O Messenger of Allāh! Surely, I will not see him; and had it not been for fear of Allāh, I surely would have spat in his face'. So he asked her: 'Will you give him back his garden which he gave you as dowry?' She said: 'Yes.' Thereupon she gave him back his garden and (the Messenger . of Allāh) separated them. And this was the first *al-khul'* in Islam.''

at-Tafsīr of al-Ayyāshī quotes al-Bāqir (a.s.) as saying in the explanation of the word of Allāh: *These are the limits of Allāh, so do not exceed them . . .* : ''Verily, Allāh was displeased with one who fornicates, and therefore He prescribed for him a hundred lashes. Now if someone becomes enraged and increases it, then I repudiate him before

Allāh; and this is the word of Allāh: *These are the limits of Allāh, so do not exceed them.*''

It is reported in *al-Kāfī* from Abū Baṣīr that he asked (Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq - a.s.) about the woman who is not allowed to her (former) husband until she marries another husband. He (the Imām) said: ''It is that woman who is divorced then returned, then (likewise) divorced the third time; it is she who is not lawful to that husband until she marries another husband and he tastes her sweetness.

The author says: *al-'Usaylah* (العُسَيْلَةُ translated here as sweetness) means sexual intercourse. It is written in *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ: al-'Usaylah* is used in the meaning of sexual intercourse. That enjoyment was likened to *al-'asal* (العَسَلُ), that is, honey, and then was given diminutive form by adding *''h''* (ة) (because *al-'asal*, is mostly used as a feminine) ; so it became (*al-'usaylah*). Also it is said that it was given the feminine form because it means 'a piece or portion of honey' as they refer to a piece of *adhdhahab* (الذَّهَبُ = gold) as *adh-dhahabah* (الذَّهَبَةُ).

And the words of the Imām, ''and he tastes her sweetness'' are based on the words of the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) which he used in the incident of Rifā'ah, ''No! Until you taste his sweetness and he tastes your sweetness''. The incident is reported in *al-Durru 'l-manthūr* as follows: ''al-Bazzāz, aṭ-Ṭabarānī and al-Bayhaqī have narrated that Rifā'ah ibn Samu'āl divorced his wife. Then she came to the Prophet and said: 'Messenger of Allāh! 'Abdu 'r-Raḥmān married me and he has not but like this.' (Saying it she pointed to a fringe of her dress.) The Messenger of Allāh kept ignoring her talk; at last he told her: 'You want to return to Rifā'ah? No ! Until you taste his (i.e., 'Abdu 'r-Raḥmān's) sweetness and he tastes your sweetness.' ''

The author says: This tradition is well-known; and has been narrated by a multitude of Sunnī narrators of the books of *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ* and others, as well as by some Shī'ah ones. And although the wordings of the various narratives are different from each other, most of them contain these words.

It is written in *at-Tahdhīb* that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) was asked the question whether the *mut'ah* marriage (with a second husband) would make the woman lawful (for the first one), to which he replied: ''No! Because Allāh says: *So if he divorces her she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband; then if he divorces her*

there is no blame on them both if they return to each other; and there is no divorce in the *mut'ah.*''

The same book quotes Muḥammad ibn Muḍārib as saying: ''I asked ar-Riḍā (a.s.) whether a eunuch could make the woman lawful (for her first husband). He (the Imām) said: 'He cannot make her lawful.' ''

It is written in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī under the words of Allāh: *And when you divorce the women and they reach their prescribed time . . . and do not retain them for injury . . .* that the Imām said: ''When he divorces her, he is not allowed to take her back (i.e., to revoke the divorce) if he does not really want her.''

It is reported in *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh* that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''It is not proper for a man to divorce his wife and then to take her back (to revoke the divorce) when he does not really want her and then divorce her again. It is the injury which Allāh has forbidden. (It is improper) except that he divorces her and then takes her back and he intends to retain her.

It is narrated in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī under the words of Allāh: *And do not take Allāh's signs for a mockery . . .* , from 'Umar ibn aj-Jamī' through his chain to 'Alī (a.s.) in a tradition in which he said, *inter alia:* ''And whoever from this *ummah* read the Qur'ān and (even then) entered the hell, then he was from among those who took the Allāh's signs for a mockery . . . ''

It is reported in *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī about the words of Allāh: *And when you have divorced the women and they have ended their term . . .*, that the sister of Ma'qil ibn Yasār was divorced by her husband, then he (the husband) left her alone until her waiting term was completed. Then again he proposed to her. Thereupon Ma'qil refused. Then the verse was revealed: *. . . then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner. . .*

The author says: This meaning has been quoted in *al-Durru 'l-manthūr* from al-Bukhārī as well as other compilers of *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* like an-Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, at-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd and others.

It is reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from as-Suddī: This verse was revealed concerning Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh al-Anṣārī. He had a cousin (daughter of his uncle); her husband gave her one divorce, and her period of waiting expired. Then the (said) husband wanted to take her

back (i.e., to remarry her). But Jābir refused saying, ‘‘You divorced our cousin and now you want to marry her second time!’’ And the woman herself wanted (to marry) her husband. Thereupon Allāh sent down the verse: *And when you have divorced the women . . .*

The author says: According to the *madhhab* of *Ahlu ’l-bayt,* a brother or a cousin has no guardianship or authority over the woman in the matters of marriage. Therefore, if either tradition is accepted, it would mean that the prohibition in the verse: . . .*then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands* . . ., is not concerned with the scope of guardianship nor does it promulgate any rule except showing that it is improper to come between a man and his wife (or would-be wife). Or that this dislike or prohibition of such interference is addressed to everyone who might prevent the woman from such remarrying, whether they be a guardian or not.

It is narrated in *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī, under the words of Allāh: *And the mothers should suckle their children for two complete years* . . ., that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ‘‘As long as the child is in the suckling-period, he is between both parents equally; thereafter, when he is weaned, the father has more right upon him than the other relatives. And if the father finds someone to suckle the child for four dirhams, and the mother says that she would not suckle him but for five dirhams, then he may take the child away from her; but it is more comforting, more uplifting and more clement to the child that he be left with his mother.’’

The same book reports that the same Imam said about the words of Allāh, ‘‘neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child’’: The woman used to resist with her hand when the man wanted to cohabit with her, saying. ‘‘I shall not allow you; I fear to become pregnant on my child.’’ And (likewise) the man used to say to the woman, ‘‘I shall not sleep with you; I am afraid that you will conceive, and thus I shall cause the death of my child.’’ Therefore, Allāh forbade the man to make the woman suffer harm, and the woman to make the man suffer.

It is narrated in the same book about the words of Allāh: *And a similar duty* (devolves) *on the* (father’s) *heir,* that one of the two Imāms (al-Bāqir or aṣ-Ṣādiq - a.s.) said: ‘‘It is about maintenance. The duty of the heir (in this respect) is like that of the father.’’

Another tradition in the same book about this verse says that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ‘‘It is not proper for the heir to make the woman suffer harm (for example) to say, ‘I shall not let her child visit her’, and to inflict harm on her child, if they have something with him; and he should not be parsimonious for him.’’

There is a tradition in the same book from Ḥammād from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he said: ‘‘There is no suckling after weaning.’’ Ḥammād said: ‘‘I told him, ‘May I be your ransom, and what is the weaning?’ He said: ‘The two years mentioned by Allāh.’ ’’

The author says: ‘‘The two years’’ is the quotation from the verse, and that is why he (the Imām) explained it as ‘‘mentioned by Allāh.’’

It is reported in *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr:* ‘‘It is narrated by ‘Abdu ’r-Razzāq (in *al-Muṣannaf*) and Ibn ‘Adī from Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘There is no orphan after puberty, and there is no suckling after weaning; and there is no (fast of) silence of the day upto the night, and there is no joining in the fast (i.e., fasting two days without breaking the fast at night), and there is no vow in a sin, and there is no maintenance in the sin, and there is no oath cutting the relationship, and there is no returning to normadic life after *al-hijrah* (الهِجْرَةُ = emigration), and there is no emigration after the conquest (of Mecca), and there is no oath (vow) for a wife with the husband nor for a child with his father nor for a slave with his master (i.e., without their permission), and there is no divorce before marriage, and there is no emancipation before owning.’ ’’

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī from Abū Bakr al-Ḥaḍramī that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ‘‘When it was revealed: *And* (as for) *those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten* (days), the women came arguing with the Messenger of Allāh and said: ‘We shall not wait’. The Messenger of Allāh told them: ‘It was (your custom) that when a woman’s husband died she took the dropping (of a camel) and threw it behind her in her private room and then sat down (therein); then when the same day (i.e., date) came after a year, she took (the dropping) and broke it and applied it (to her eyes) as antimony; and then she could marry. Now Allāh has put down (reduced) from you eight months.’ ’’

It is narrated in *at-Tahdhīb* from al-Bāqir (a.s.) that he said: ‘‘In

every marriage, when the husband dies it is (incumbent) upon the woman (whether she is a free woman or a slave), and by whatever system the matrimonial bond was established (whether by *mut'ah,* permanent marriage or slavery), to observe the waiting period of four months and ten days.''

It is narrated in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī from Muḥammad ibn Muslim that he asked al-Bāqir (a.s.): 'May I be your ransom! Why is the waiting period of a divorced woman three menstruations or three months and that of the woman whose husband dies four months and ten days?'' He (the Imām) said: ''As for the waiting period of three months for a divorced woman, it is (prescribed) to make sure that there is no child in the womb. And as for the waiting period of a woman whose husband dies surely Allāh has laid down a provision for the women and one upon them: The provision made for them is in *al-'īlā'*, a period of four months, as He says: *For those who swear* (to abstain from their wives is ordained) *a waiting for four months.* It is, therefore, not lawful for anyone (to abstain from the wife) for more than four months; because Allāh knows that it is the furthest limit to which a woman may keep her sexual desire under control. And the provision made against them is that He ordered her to observe waiting period, when her husband dies, for four months and ten days. In this way, He (Allāh) took from her for him at the time of his death what He took from him for her during his lifetime.

The author says: This meaning is also narrated from ar-Riḍā and al-Hādī (a.s.) from other chains.

It is written in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) about the words of Allāh: *And there is no blame on you respecting that which you speak indirectly in the asking of* (such) *women in marriage:* ''The women in her *'iddah*, you speak to her in a graceful manner to attract her towards yourself. And you do not say, 'I do this and this' or 'I perform like this', hinting at indecent things.'' And another tradition says: ''You tell her, when she is in her *'iddah*, 'O so-and-so! I do not like but only that which pleases you; and if your *'iddah* expires, you will not find me missing, God willing; and you should not keep yourself (alone). All this (you may say) without resolving the marriage-tie.''

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning from the Imāms.

The *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī quotes aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he explained the words of Allāh: *And if you divorce them before you have touched them . . .*, in these words: ‘‘When the man divorces his wife before cohabiting with her, then she shall get half of her dowry; and if he had not appointed for her a dowry, then (for her) is a provision according to usage, on the wealthy according to his means and on the straitened in circumstances according to his means. And there is no waiting period for her and she may immediately marry whoever she wishes.

There is a tradition in *al-Kāfī* from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) about the man who divorces his wife before cohabiting with her: ‘‘On him is half of the dowry, if anything was fixed (as dowry); and if nothing was fixed then he should give her a provision as other women of her status are provided for.’’

The author says: This tradition explains the words, ‘‘a provision according to usage.’’

al-Kāfī, *at-Tahdhīb*, *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī and other books narrate from al-Bāqir and aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) under the words of Allāh: ‘‘In whose hand is the marriage-tie’’, that both Imāms said: ‘‘It is *al-walī* (الوَلِيُّ = the guardian of the marriage).’’

The author says: There are numerous traditions giving this explanation. And there are some Sunnī traditions narrated from the Prophet and ‘Alī (a.s.) that it means ‘‘the husband’’.

It is narrated in *al-Kāfī, Man lā yaḥḍuruhu ’l-faqīh, at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī and that of al-Qummī, about the words of Allāh: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer*, through numerous chains from al-Bāqir and aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that: ‘‘Surely, the middle prayer is the noon prayer.’’

The author says: It is what is narrated from the Imāms of *Ahlu ’l-bayt* (a.s.) in their traditions with one voice. Of course, some of those traditions show that it is the Friday prayer. But it appears from the same traditions that they treat the noon and the Friday prayers as one prayer, not two. It is narrated in *al-Kāfī* and *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī from Zurārah from al-Bāqir (a.s.) — and the wording quoted here is from *al-Kāfī* — that he (the Imām) said: ‘‘Allāh says: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer*, and it is the prayer of the noon, the first prayer the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) prayed, and it is (in) the middle of the day and between the two prayers of the day-time — the dawn and

afternoon prayers.'' And he said : ''And this verse was revealed and the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) was on a journey, so he (the Holy Prophet) recited *qunūt* in it and continued it likewise in the journey and at the home-town, and he added two *rak'ahs* for him who is in his home-town. And those two *rak'ahs* added by the Prophet were dropped on Friday, for him who is in his home-town, because of the two sermons recited by the Imām. Therefore, he who prays on Friday without congregation, shall pray four *rak'ahs* of noon prayer like all other days . . .''

This tradition, as you see, counts the noon and the Friday prayers as one prayer, and says that it is the middle prayer. But most *of* these tradtions are *al-maqṭū'* (المَقْطُوْعُ i.e., their chain of narrators are broken, or do not reach a *ma'ṣūm*); and those that are connected to a *ma'ṣūm*, their texts are not free from confusion, like the above-mentioned tradition of *al-Kāfī.* Moreover it does not clearly fit the meaning of the verse. And Allāh knowns better.

It is reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr:* Aḥmad, Ibn al-Manī', an-Nasā'ī, Ibn Jābir, ash-Shāshī and ad-Ḍiyā' have narrated through the chain of az-Zibriqān: ''Verily, there was a group of the Quraysh, and Zayd ibn Thābit passed by them and they were assembled. So they sent two of their boys to him to ask him about the middle prayer. And he said: 'It is the noon prayer'. Then the boys came to Usāmah ibn Zayd and asked him (the same question). And he said: 'It is the noon prayer. Verily, the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) used to pray the noon prayer in the summer and there would not be behind him except one or two lines, and the people were in their siesta or at their trade. Thereupon, Allāh sent down the verse: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allāh.* Then the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ''The men should desist (from that behaviour) or most surely I shall burn down their houses.'' ' ''

The author says: The same reason has been narrated by Zayd ibn Thābit and others from other chains.

And know that there is much difference of opinion regarding the meaning of ''the middle prayer'', much of it arises because of differences in the Sunnī traditions. It has been said that it is the dawn prayer, and it has been narrated from 'Alī (a.s.) and some companions. Others say that it is noon prayer, and it has been reported from the Holy Prophet and a

number of the companions. Again it is said that it is the afternoon prayer, and this also has been reported from the Prophet and a number of companions — as-Suyūṭi has narrated in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* more than fifty traditions of this meaning. Some say that it is the evening prayer. Other say that it is hidden among the prayers as the Night of Destiny is hidden among the nights of Ramaḍān. This is reported in some traditions from some companions. And also it is said that it is the night prayers ; and, lastly, that it is the Friday prayer.

It is reported in *Majma'u 'l-bayān* about the words of Allāh; *And stand truly obedient to Allāh,* that *al-qunūt* (اَلْقُنُوْتُ = obedience) is the invocation in the prayer during the standing posture, and it is narrated from al-Bāqir and aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.).

The author says: Also it is narrated from some companions.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said about this verse: ''(*al-Qunūt* means) one's going towards prayer and maintaining (i.e., praying) it in its time, so that nothing diverts one's attention or keeps him from it.''

The author says: There is no conflict between the two traditions, as one may easily understand.

It is reported in *al-Kāfī* about the words of Allāh: *But if you are in danger, then* (say your prayers) *on foot or on horse back . . .*, that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''When he is afraid of a beast or a thief, he will say *at-takbīr* and point (for the actions of prayer).''

And there is another tradition in *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh* from the same Imām about the prayer when marching on: ''It is *at-takbīr* and *at-tahlīl.*'' Then he (the Imām) recited this verse.

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imām : ''If you are in a fearful land and are afraid of a thief or a beast, then say the obligatory prayer and you are on your (riding) animal.''

And the same book quotes a tradition of al-Bāqir (a.s.): ''He who is afraid of a thief shall pray by sign while (riding) on his mount.''

The author says: There are numerous traditions of this meaning.

It is reported in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī from Abū Baṣīr that he said: ''I asked him (the Imām) about the words of Allāh: *And those of you who die and leave wives behind,* (make) *a bequest in favour of their wives of maintenance for the year without turning* (them) *out.* He (the Imām) said: 'It is abrogated.' I said: 'And how was it?' He (the

Imām) said: 'It was (a custom) that when a man died, his wife was maintained from his capital for one year; then she was turned out without any inheritance. Then it was abrogated by the verse of one-fourth and one-eigth. Now the woman is given maintenance from her own share.' ''

There is another tradition in the same book that Mu'āwiyah ibn 'Ammār said: ''I asked him (the Imām) about the words of Allāh: *And those of you who die . . .* He said: 'It is abrogated; the verse: . . . *they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten* (days), abrogated it, and the verse of inheritance abrogated it.' ''

It is reported in *al-Kāfī* and *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī: aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) was asked about a man who divorces his wife, should he make provision for her? He said: ''Yes. Does not he like to be one of the doers of good? Does not he like to be one of those who fear (Allāh)? ''

A SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE ABOUT WOMAN

It is well known that Islam — and we should not forget that it is Allāh who legislated it — did not base its laws on experiments, like all other laws. Yet, we are sometimes obliged to look at the rules, laws and customs of modern and even ancient peoples, so that we may rationally judge the *sharī'ah* of Islam. We have to look at the felicity of the human races and then see whether other customs and laws fulfil the requirements of humanity or not. In this way, we may see the difference between Islamic and non-Islamic rules, and appreciate the living and powerful spirit of Islam in comparison with others. That is why we refer to the history of nations and societies, and describe what they have to say on particular subject.

Accordingly, we should discuss the ideas and ideals of Islam about the following:

1. The identity of woman and the comparison of it with the identity of man.
2. Her value and importance in society — so that we may know what influence she had and has in human life.
3. Her rights and the laws made about her.

4. The foundation of the above-mentioned laws.

But before we discuss the above subjects from the Islamic point of view, it is necessary to look at history and see what her life was like before the advent of Islam, and what treatment has been accorded to her by non-Muslim nations — both civilized and uncivilized — uptil now. It is not within the scope of this book to go into the detail of these subjects; but a short review will not be out of place.

THE LIFE OF WOMAN IN UNCIVILIZED NATIONS

In uncivilized tribes and nations — like the tribes of Africa, the aboriginals of Australia, the inhabitants of the Pacific Ocean islands, the Red Indians of America, etc., a woman's life in comparison with a man's life was exactly like the life of a domestic animal as compared with the life of a human being.

Because of the natural instinct of exploitation, man believes that he has a right to possess cattle and other domestic animals, and to use them as he wishes and in any work he likes. He makes use of their hair, wool, meat, bones, blood, hides and milk; they serve him as a guard and watch; they are exploited even for breeding and procreating; their offspring and their profit serve the purpose of man; they carry his burden, are used in agriculture and hunting and satisfy the need of man in countless other ways.

These animals have no say at all about their own necessities of life and their desires, like food and drink, living space, their sexual urge, and the rest. It is only their owner who provides them with these items according to his own wish. And he would never wish but what is beneficial to himself through those animals. If we were to look from the eyes of that animal at the arrangements made by man we would surely be alternately amused and enraged at his high-handedness; we would find an animal being persecuted without any fault, another one crying for help without anyone paying any heed to it, a third one oppressing others without any hindrance; we would see one living a blissful and enjoyable life without doing any work to deserve it, like the stallion or the bull kept for breeding, which lives a most happy life according to its own view; and would find others living a distressed and difficult life without having committed any sin to deserve such a punishment, like a donkey which

carries loads heavier than itself and the horse in the mill.

Such animals do not have even the right of life. The owner believes that it is he who has the right of their lives. If someone kills a horse, he is not charged with the murder of that horse, he is only accused of destroying the property of the owner. It is because man thinks that the animal's existence is an appendage to his own existence, its life is an offshoot of his own life; and that its status is that of a hanger-on.

The position of a woman *vis-a-vis* a man in these tribes and societies is exactly the same. According to their belief, woman was created for man. She was her man's appendage even in existence and life.

It was the father who owned her so long as she was not married, and the husband assumed that right soon after marriage.

The man could sell her, gift her away or loan her to some other man for the purpose of cohabitation, procreation, or service, etc. He could mate out to her any punishment he decided upon, even the death penalty. He could abandon her, without caring whether she would die. He could kill her to feed on her meat, especially in feasts and during famine. All the properties and rights of the woman belonged to the man; only he, and not she, could enter into dealings — selling, buying, accepting, rejecting — on her behalf.

And the woman was duty-bound to obey the man — her father or husband — whether she liked it or not; she was not expected to act independently even in her, let alone his affairs. It was her duty to look after the house and the children and make sure that the man's whims and desires were properly satisfied. When there was work to do, she always got the hardest, like carrying heavy load on her back, digging the earth, etc., and from vocations and handicrafts her share was the lowest and the most worthless. Things got bad to such extent that in some tribes a woman, after giving birth to a child, had to get up at once and engage herself in household drudgery, while the man lay on her bed convalescing and getting treatment for himself.

These were her rights and her duties. Every tribe and society had its own special rules and characteristics according to its habit and habitat; anyone interested should study the books written on this subject.

WOMAN IN PRE-ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS

Now we come to those nations who lived under traditional well-defined customs which they had inherited from their forefathers, and which were not based on any book or codified law. Such were the people of ancient China, India, Egypt and Iran.

In all these civilizations the woman had no independence or freedom, either in her intentions or her actions; she was totally under the guardianship and mastership of man. Neither could she decide on anything concerning herself, nor had she any right to interfere in civilian affairs like the government, the judiciary, etc.

It was her duty to participate with man in all the responsibilities of life, like earning a livelihood. In addition, it was her exclusive duty to look after domestic affairs and the children. She had to obey her man in all his orders and desires.

On the whole, a woman in these societies was in a better position than her sisters in uncivilized nations. She was not killed, and her meat was not used in feasts. She was not entirely deprived of the right to property; she owned to a certain extent what she got from inheritance or marriage, though she could not administer it independently. The man had the right to take as many wives as he desired, and to divorce whomever he wished. The husband could marry after the death of his wife, but in most cases the widow had no such right; and mostly she was forbidden to participate in society beyond her door-step.

Each of these civilizations had some particular customs. The class system in Iranian society, gave women of the upper class a right to participate in government and state and to succeed to the throne. Also it recognized as valid a marriage with women having close affinity, like the mother, daughter or sister.

In China, marriage was a sort of servitude for woman. The husband almost purchased and owned her. She had no right in inheritance and could not eat with men, not even with her own sons. Polyandry was allowed; many men jointly married one woman, and shared her among themselves, and the child was affiliated in most cases with the strongest husband.

In India, she was completely an appendage of the man. She was not allowed to remarry after the death of her husband — she would be burnt

alive with the body of the deceased husband; otherwise she would live in disgrace. During her monthly period she was treated as the dirtiest thing; even her clothes could not be touched by others.

In short, the status of women in these nations was something between a human being and an animal. She was treated as a minor child under his guardianship; but unlike the child, she was never thought fit to be free from the yoke of her man's guardianship.

WOMAN IN SOME OTHER CIVILIZATIONS

There were some other nations who lived under, and were governed by, a codified law or book, like the Chaldeans, the Romans and the Greeks.

The Chaldeans and the Assyrians followed Hammurabi's Code, which made the woman an appendage of her husband; she was not independent in her decision or action. If the wife disobeyed her husband in any way, or decided independently on anything, the husband could turn her out of his home or could bring in another wife degrading the offending wife to concubinage. If she made any mistake in household management or exceeded the limits of the domestic budget, the husband could lodge complaints before the judge and on being found guilty she could be drowned in water.

The Romans were the first to enact civil laws. The earliest laws were made four centuries before the Christian era; and were gradually completed and perfected. The Roman law gave some freedom to the woman in her own affairs. The master of the house, that is, her husband and the father of her children, was vested as a sort of godhead; he was worshipped by the people of his household, as he, in his return, worshipped his forefathers and ancestors. He had full authority and decisive will in all that he desired and ordered concerning his family — he could kill them, if he so wished, without anybody lifting a finger to restrain him. The females of the family — wife, dauther and sister — were in a worse condition than the male members, even than their own sons. The women were not a part of society; their complaints were not heard, their dealings were not recognized and they could not interfere in social affairs. But the men, like brothers and sons, even the adopted ones (adoption and affiliation of children to other than their real fathers was a common practice in Roman society as well as in Greek, Iranian and

Arabian) could be granted independence in their affairs by the master of the house.

The females were not a part of the household. The men were the members of the family, and the women were their appendage. Any formal relationship, giving the right of inheritance, etc., was reserved for between the males. The women had no formal relationships — neither between themselves like mother with daughter, or sister with sister, nor between themselves and the men like wife with husband, mother with son, sister with brother or daughter with father. And there was no mutual right of inheritance except where there was the formal relationship. Of course, the natural relationship was not denied, and some consequences of that half-hearted acceptance were the prohibition of marriage between close relations in many societies, and the guardianship of the master of the house over her women.

In short, woman, in their eyes, was a parasite, completely dependent in her social and domestic life; the rein of her life and her will was in the hands of the master of the household — her father if she was with him, or husband if she lived with him, or others. The master could do with her whatever he wished, and decide about her as he thought fit. He sold her, gifted her away, loaned her to others for sexual enjoyment, gave her in repayment of debt, rent or taxes. He punished her by beating and even killing her. He had the authority to administer her property if she got hold of any through marriage or if she earned it with the permission of her master; but not through inheritance because she had no such right. Her father or other male relatives gave her in marriage and her husband had the right to dissolve the marriage.

The custom of the Greeks in the composition of the household and the mastership of the males was almost identical with the Romans. Their social and domestic organization was made up of the males; the females were their dependants. They had no independence in their will or action except under the guardianship of men. But there was a surprising contradiction in that system: if there was any decision to be taken against the woman, she was treated as an independent person, and if there was any judgement in her favour, she was a dependant of men — provided such orders were of benefit to the men. Thus, the woman was punished for all her faults and crimes as though she were independent, but she was never rewarded for her good work except under guardianship of her man.

This shows that these legal systems did not think that woman was a part of human society, not even a weaker part dependent on others; instead, they treated her as a harmful bacterium which disturbed society and damaged its health; but there was the unavoidable reality that she was needed to continue the human race; therefore it was necessary to look after her. Even then she should be punished if she made a mistake or committed a crime; and her rewards should be given to the man when she did a good work. She was not to be left to do as she liked; otherwise, society would come to harm. In this she was like a powerful enemy who has been defeated, caught and enslaved; he lives his long life under duress; if he does any wrong he is punished, but if he does a good deed he is not thanked.

As society, according to their thinking, was made up of the men only, they believed that the progeny in reality consisted of male children only, and the family could continue only when there was a male child to carry it on. This belief was the basis of the system of the adoption of sons. The house which had no male child was thought to be ruined, and such a family was deemed extinct and dead. No wonder then that they had to adopt others' sons as their own to save the family from extinction. Such adopted sons were treated as legitimate, legally recognized sons, having mutual rights of inheritance, and subject to all the rules and customs concerning natural sons. When a man thought himself to be sterile, he brought one of his relatives like a brother or a brother's son to sleep with his wife, so that she could conceive by that relative, and the son born thereof would be called his own son, and the family would continue.

Marriage and divorce in Greece was like the Roman system. They could marry more than one wife, but only one of the wives would be officially recognized; others were unofficial.

WOMAN IN ARABIA: THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE QUR'ĀN WAS REVEALED

The Arabs lived in the Arabian peninsula, an infertile land with an extremely hot climate. Most of them belonged to nomadic tribes far away from any civilization; they lived on raid and plunder. Their

neighbours were Iran on the one side, Rome (the Byzantine Empire) on the other and Ethiopia and Sudan on the third.

As a result of this geography, most of their customs and traditions were barbarous, and traces could be found in them of some Roman and Iranian traditions, as well as some Indian and ancient Egyptian customs.

The Arabs did not accord any independence to the woman in her life; nor did she have any honour or dignity except that of her family. She was not entitled to inheritance. A man could marry as many wives as he desired; there was no restriction on divorce. Daughters were buried alive. This wicked custom was started by Banū Tamīm when many of their daughters were made captive after a war against Nu‘mān ibn Mundhir. This disturbed them very much and they started burying their daughters alive. Gradually the practice was adopted by other tribes. When a daughter was born, the father thought it a disgrace and hid himself from others' eyes. On the other hand, his joy knew no bounds when he got news that a son was born — the more the better, even if the son was an adopted one. They gladly affiliated to themselves the son born as a result of their adultery. Sometimes, when many people slept with one woman in one month and a son was born, every one of them claimed him for himself and often than not, this led to dispute and conflicts.

Even then, it was seen in some families that their women had some freedom, and especially the daughters were free in matrimonial affairs, their consent and choice was respected and accepted. In this they were influenced by Iranian upper class society.

Anyhow, their treatment of women was a mixture of the civilized systems of Rome and Iran (not giving them any independent rights, not allowing them to participate in public affairs like government and war, except in exceptional cases) and the barbarous systems of primitive nomads. The women were deprived of many human rights, but not because the master of the house was a sacred person deserving to be worshipped. It was simply a matter of the stronger party subjugating and exploiting the weaker one.

So far as worship was concerned, all of them (men and women both) worshipped idols, as was also done by the aṣ-Ṣābi'īn, the worshippers of stars etc. Every tribe had its own idol made according to its liking and preference. They also worshipped the celestial bodies and the angels

(whom they thought to be the daughters of Allāh!) and made idols representing them according to their own fancy. The idols were made of various materials, often of stone and wood, though Banū Ḥanīfah are reported to have made their idol from flour. They worshipped it for a long time, then came a time of famine, so they ate it. A poet says about it:

The (tribe of) *Ḥanīfah ate its lord,*
At the time of hardship and famine.
They did not fear their lord,
About (its) *evil consequences and effect.*

Sometimes they worshipped a stone; then if a more beautiful stone came to hand, the first one was thrown away and replaced by the second one. If nothing suitable was found, they took a double handful of earth, brought a sheep or goat and milked it over that mound of earth. Then they started going round it and worshipping it.

Such deprivation and misery created in woman's mind a weakness which made her an easy prey to superstition and credulity. Books of history and anthropology have recorded how she fell into error whenever she tried to explain natural phenomena and simple events.

This in short, was the condition of woman in human society in various eras before the advent of Islam. It may be seen from above that:

First: Men thought that women were human beings, but on the level of dumb animals, or with very weak and low grade human qualities, who could not be trusted if set free. The first was the view of primitive people, and the second, of others.

Second: Society did not accord her the status of a member; and she was not considered an integral part of humanity. For primitives, she was one of the necessities of life like a home and accomodation. For civilized people, she was a captive and dependdant on her masters who took advantage of her labour and always remained alert lest she escaped or cheated.

Third: Both types of societies deprived her of all common rights; she was given only that much which was necessary for her exploitation by men.

Fourth: They treated her as a strong person treats a weakling. In other words, the basis of their dealings with her was exploitation. In addition, civilized nations believed that she was a weak human being, incapable of independently looking after herself, and who could not be

trusted in any matter.

Different nations and tribes had different ways, and sometimes customs and beliefs were mixed; also there were variations in the degrees and grades of the above treatment.

WHAT ISLAM BROUGH FOR WOMAN

Woman had to undergo patiently the above-mentioned treatment, which imprisoned her in the dungeon of humiliation and disgrace. Consequently, weakness and inferiority became her second nature; she was brought up in this environment and lived and died in it. Ultimately, the word ‘woman’ became synonymous with ‘weakness’ and ‘insignificance’ — not only in the conversation of men but even in the language of women themselves.

Look at any society, primitive or civilized, and you will find adages and proverbs reflecting on woman’s feebleness and unimportance. Take any two or more languages of different origins and unrelated developments, and you will find one thing in common: allegories, metaphors and similes connected with the word ‘woman’ to scold a coward, to rebuke a weakling and to chide a contemptible and despised person. An Arab poet said:

I do not know (*and would that I knew*),
Whether the family of Ḥiṣn are people or women.

Such expressions may be seen in hundreds and thousands in every language.

These idioms and expressions were enough to show what human society believed about women, even if there were nothing recorded in the books of history and culture, because the ideas and ideals of a nation may clearly be gleaned from its language.

The only thing showing any consideration and care towards her is found in a few sentences of the Torah and in the admonition of Jesus to have mercy on her.

Then came Islam, the religion of truth and monotheism, accompanied by the Qur’ān. Islam originated and initiated in her favour a system which the world had never known before, from the early dawn of humanity. It set forth straight away against the dictum of the whole

world, and rebuilt, for her, her natural place, which the world had completely destroyed, from the very beginning. It cancelled and dismissed as baseless their belief about her identity and their practice concerning her treatment.

HER IDENTITY: Islam declared that woman is as much a human being as man is. Every person, male or female, is a human being, whose substance and ingredients combinedly originate from two human beings — one male and one female, and no one has any superiority over the other except through piety. Allāh says: *O you people! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honourable of you with Allāh is one among you who guards* (him/her self) *most* (against evil) ; *surely Allāh is Knowing, Aware* (49:13). Allāh clearly says that every human being originates and is made from two human beings, a male and a female, and they both jointly and in equal degree are the source of his existence; and everyone, male or female, is a combination of the substances taken from those two. Note that Allāh did not say as the Arab poet had said: ''And surely the mothers of the people are but receptacles''. Nor did He say like another poet:

Our sons are (those who are) *the*
sons of our sons; and as for our daughters,
Their sons are the sons of distant men.

Instead He (Allāh) declared that every one was created jointly from both male and female. All were, therefore, similar to each other. There could be no declaration more complete and more appropriate. Finally, He declared that being a male or a female or being born in a certain family or tribe is not the criterion of superiority. Superiority originates only from piety.

Also, Allāh has said: . . . *that I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other* . . . (3:195).

Here it is clearly said that endeavour is not repulsed and work is not wasted. And why? Because the one of you is from the other. This verse in this way clearly says what was implied in the words of the previous verse, ''surely We have created you of a male and a female'': The man and the woman together are a single species, without any difference in their origin and root. He goes on to say that the work of anyone from

these two groups is not wasted before Allāh; it will not be neglected, nor will its reward be given to another person; every soul is mortgaged against its own endeavours. It is not as the people have said, that women were responsible for their mistakes, but so far as their good work was concerned, its reward should be given to the men.

Every male and every female shall get what he or she does, and there is no superiority except of piety. The virtues are a part of piety like faith with its various degrees, beneficial knowledge, balanced wisdom, good character, patience and forbearance. Therefore, a believing woman (in various stages of the faith), or a learned and wise one, or one who is of noble character, will be superior in her own right, and higher in grade than those men, whosoever, who are not equal to her in these virtues. Because there is no superiority except of piety and noble character.

There are other verses of the same meaning, and rather more clear. Allāh says:

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did (16:97).

. . . and whoever does good, whether male or female and he is a believer, these shall enter the garden in which they shall be given sustenance without measure (40:40).

And whoever does good deeds, whether male or female and he is a believer, these shall enter the garden, and they shall not be dealt with a jot unjustly (4:124).

And Allāh has condemned their desdain of the daughters in these words (and it is the most telling condemnation):

And when a daughter is announced to one of them his face becomes black and he is full of wrath. He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that which is announced to him. Should he keep it with disgrace or bury it (alive) *in the dust? Now surely evil is what they judge* (16:58 — 59).

Obviously they hid themselves because they thought that a daughter was a disgrace for the father. They thought that she would soon reach marriageable age and would become a toy in the hands of her husband who would use her for sexual enjoyment — a shameful thing; and this

shame would effect her family and her father; it was, therefore, better to bury her alive. (The original reason of this custom has already been described.) Allāh severely condemned this practice in these word: *And when the buried alive shall be asked for what sin she was killed* (81:8-9).

There has remained a residue of such superstitions among Muslims, a legacy of their pagan ancestors, which has not been washed away from their hearts. You will see them thinking that illicit sexual relations are a shame and disgrace for the woman (even if she repents) but not for the man (even if he continues in that sin) ; while Islam has declared that disgrace and evil belongs to the sin in which the man and the woman were equal partners.

HER VALUE IN SOCIETY: Islam has made the man and the woman equal in their will and action so far as the management of their lives is concerned. Allāh said: *The one of you being from the other* (3:195). She is independent in her will and intention and independent in her action. The woman owns the products of her own will and action as the man owns his own without any difference whatsoever. *For her is the benefit of what she earns, and on her is the responsibility of what she does.*

According to Islam both are equal; the Qur’ān confirms it and Allāh shows the truth to be the truth by His words. Side by side, Islam recognizes two special qualities in her, by which the Creator has distinguished her from the man: First, she is like a tilth for the creation and propagation of the human race. The species cannot exist without her. This distinction calls for some special rules concerning her life. Second, she has a comparatively delicate body and a sensitive perception. This has a tangible effect on her life and on the social and domestic responsibilities entrusted to her.

This is her value in human society — and also the value of the man may be understood from it. These two distinctions are the basis of all the rules that are common to both groups and of those that are reserved for either of the two. Allāh says: *And do not covet that by which Allāh has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn; and ask Allāh of His grace; surely Allāh knows all things* (4:32). It shows that the contribution made by each group to society is the criterion of the excellence granted to it. And it is this excellence which gives special status to one in comparison to the other. For example, man has been

given preference over woman in the share of inheritance; while woman has been given preference over man by being exempted from the responsibilities of maintenance. And no one should covet the preference given to someone else.

There is another type of excellence which results from the deeds of the doer, whoever he or she might be. For example, the virtues of faith, knowledge, reason, piety and other admirable qualities. And it is the grace of Allāh, He gives it to whomsoever He wishes, and ask Allāh of His grace.

The proof of the above statement is found in the words of Allāh, following the above-mentioned verse: *Men are the maintainers of women . . .* (3:34).

COMMON AND SPECIAL RULES: Woman, like man, is subject to all the rules concerning worship and social rights. She may act independently in all matter in which man is free to act, like inheritance, earning, dealings with other people, learning, teaching, making a claim, defending her rights, and so on. In all such affairs, Islam makes no discrimination between man and woman.

Of course, in other matters it has limited her sphere of activity, because of her natural characteristics. For example, she may not be made a ruler or a Qāḍī, she is exempted from participation in fighting, although she may attend the *jihād* and be entrusted with its other responsibilities, like nursing and treating the wounded soldiers; and she gets half the share of man in inhertance. She has to hide her body and the places of adornment; she has to obey her husband so far as his conjugal rights are concerned. To compensate these burdens, she is exempted from her own maintenance; it is her father or husband who must maintain her, and they are also obliged to protect her to their utmost ability, and she has the right to bring up her children. Islam has also enjoined that her person and honour must be protected — her name may not be used in an undignified manner. Also, she is exempted from worship during her monthly period and after delivery. In short, Islam says that in all conditions and in every way she should be treated with ternderness and kindness.

What she is obliged to learn and do, in brief, is as follows: On the side of learning, she must know the fundamentals of the faith and the commandments of the *sharī'ah* concerning worship and civil rules. And on the side of action, she must follow the rules of the religion and obey

her husband by giving him his conjugal rights.

But she is not obliged to earn her livelihood by any employment, handicrafts or artisanship. Nor she is obliged to take up the drudgery of domestic work. Similarly, it is not her duty to burden herself with what is considered useful for the general welfare of the society, like learning various disciplines (other than those mentioned earlier) or participating in useful industries or handicrafts.

She is not obliged to do so. But if she acquires such extra knowledge or looks after her domestic arrangements or affairs useful for the society, it will be regarded as her extra excellence, provided she keeps within the limits imposed upon her by the *sharī'ah.* It will be a matter of pride for her. Islam has allowed, nay, encouraged her to boast of such achievements before her compatriots, although it has forbidden the men to boast (except in *jihād*).

The traditions of the Prophet support what we have said. Space does not allow full details; otherwise, we would have liked to describe how the Prophet lived with his wife, Khadījah, and his daughter, Fāṭimah, as well as with his other wives; and how he behaved with the women of his community and what he said and enjoined about women. Also, we would have quoted the traditions narrated from the Imāms of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* and their women like Zaynab (d/o 'Alī), Fāṭimah and Sakīnah (ds/o Husayn) and others, and what they said about women. Perhaps we will get a chance to quote some of them in the traditions connected with the verses concerning woman.

THE FOUNDATION: The foundation upon which these rules have been built is nature. It may be understood from the explanation under the heading, ''Her value in the Society''. Further, details are as follows:

The scholars of social sciences will no doubt agree with the premise that the duties imposed by society should be based upon natural abilities and demands. It is nature which has led human beings to this collective social life from the earliest dawn of humanity. Of course, a certain society may at times deviate from the natural course. As the body, by deviating from its natural way, looses its health and becomes sick, likewise, a society, by astraying from natural dictates, deteriorates into chaos.

Society, healthy or sick, is thus based on nature; although a sick society has been contaminated by extraneous and harmful elements

during its progress.

This fact has been mentioned, or alluded to, by scholars of social sciences. And the Book of Allāh, long before these researches, has explained it in the most excellent style: *Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation, then guided it* (20:50); *Who created, then made complete, and Who made* (things) *according to a measure, then guided* (87:2—3); *And* (I swear by) *the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it* (91:7-8).

These and other such verses show that all things, including human beings, are guided to what they have been created for; and that they have been equipped with what is needed to reach their goal. The blissful life is that which conforms perfectly with the dictates of nature. It has been pointed out in these words of Allāh: *Then set your face uprightly for the* (right) *religion — the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no alteration* (by anyone else) *in the creation of Allāh; that is the established religion* . . . (30:30).

So far as social norms are concerned, nature demands that all individuals should have equal rights and duties. It does not approve of giving one more than his due and oppressing another by depriving him of his rights. But this equality does not mean that every individual should be offered every responsibility and every office. It would be wrong, for example, for a young inexperienced man to be given the place of a well-experienced official, or for an idiot to be given the chair of a professor; or to expect from a weakling the performance of a strong and brave person. If we treat capable and incapable persons equally, it will be harmful to both.

What is then the meaning of this equality? It means that every person should be given his right and put in his proper place. This equality between individuals and groups implies that each shall get his due rights without any let or hindrance; no right shall be usurped or denied unjustly. The following words of Allāh point to it:

. . . *and they have rights similar to those upon them in a just manner, and for the men is* (the right) *a degree above them* . . . This verse ordains equality between the rights of both groups at the same time as it shows the difference between both.

Both groups, men and women, share equally in the basic gifts of thinking and will (which in their turn create free choice). She should,

therefore, be equally free in her thought and will and should have free choice. In other words, she should be free to look after her life's affairs — as well as social, except where there is any genuine reason to the contrary. Islam gave her this freedom and independence in full measure, as has been explained earlier. She, thus, became, by the grace of Allāh, an independent personality, unfettered in her will and action by men and their guardianship. She got what the world had denied her throughout all her existence since the beginning of humanity and which was unheard of in all her history. Allāh says: *There is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a proper manner* (2:234).

But while sharing these basic qualities with man, she differs from him in other ways. An average woman lags behind an average man in the build of her body and its basic organs, like the brain, the heart, the veins, the nerves, her height and weight. (The details may be seen in any book of anatomy.) As a result, her body is comparatively soft and elegant, while a man's is tough and rough. And the fine sentiments, like love, tender-heartedness, and inclination towards beauty and adornment are more pronounced in her than in man. On the other hand, the reasoning power is more prominent in man than in woman. The woman lives a sentimental life; the man an intellectual one.

It was for this reason, that Islam differentiated between men and women in those duties and responsibilities which were related to reason and those related to sentiment. Ruling, judging and fighting have been reserved for man, because these things are closely related to reasoning and thinking. And the bringing up of, and looking after, the children, the domestic management has been reserved for woman. Her maintenance is the responsibility of her husband, for which he is compensated by a double share in inheritance.

Look at the division of inheritance in this way: It is as though inheritance is divided in two equal shares. Then one-third of the woman's share is given to the man in lieu of her maintenance. Thus the man gets two-thirds of the estate and the woman is left with one-third. But the expenses of her maintenance are not less than that of a man. In this way, she gets the benefit of the man's two-thirds share in equal measure. (One-third's benefit goes to her while the man gets the benefit of the remaining one-third.) The nett result is that the man gets two-thirds in species while

the woman gets two-thirds in benefit. Man has been given more to manage, because reasoning is his predominant characteristic; woman has been bestowed with more to benefit from and enjoy, because feeling and sentiment is more pronounced in her nature. (This topic will be explained under the verses of inheritance.) Then Allāh completed His grace and bounty to women by giving them the concessions and exemptions mentioned earlier.

QUESTION: The above-mentioned clemency granted in Islam to woman makes her idle. When she is told to hide herself from strangers and is guaranteed all the necessities of life (by transferring its burden onto man) she is bound to become slow, lazy, idle and unproductive; she will not be able to exert herself in difficult works and professions. Thus her growth will be retarded and her progress will turn into backwardness; she will not be able to contribute meaningfully in making society perfect. And experience is an irrefutable proof of this aspect.

REPLY: It is one thing to ordain laws to improve the conditions of humanity; and a completely separate thing to enforce these laws through exemplary character and good upbringing (which leads humanity to progress). It was the tragedy of Islam in the past that it did not get good rulers and striving guardians. Consequently, the laws were suffocated, upbringing halted and then turned in the opposite direction. Irrefutable experience shows that mere theories and beliefs do not produce the desired result, unless, and until, they are ingrained in the soul by exhortation and good training and example. The Muslims in their long history could not take any good example to follow from their rulers, who usurped full authority over them. Look at Mu‘āwiyah speaking on the pulpit of Iraq after taking over the caliphate: ‘‘I did not fight you to make you pray or fast — this is your own affair. I fought you only to become your ruler, and this I have now become.’’ Also look at other caliphs from the Umayyid and ‘Abbāsid dynasties and other rulers after them. All of them were of the same type. And had it not been that this religion gets its light from the light of Allāh which cannot be extinguished (and Allāh is to complete His light even if the unbelievers dislike it), judgement would have been pronounced against the Muslims long ago.

THE FREEDOM OF WOMEN IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION

There is no doubt whatsoever that Islam was the first to release woman from her bondage and to grant her freedom of will and action. All the slogans of the emancipation of woman raised in western countries are an echo of the clarion call of Islam. These nations in this matter are just following the lead given by Islam — even though they have made mistakes in this endeavour. The principle laid down by Islam is a perfectly circular ring, and nothing can be added to, or substracted from, this circle without distrubing the whole alignment.

These people tried to improve upon the masterpiece of Islam, and decided to create complete equality between man and woman in all rights and privileges. This was done after long agitations and demands. They did not pause to ponder that woman lags behind man in many powers and faculties.

They explain away the inherent weakness of the woman by attributing it to the defective training and upbringing to which she has been subjected since time immemorial (perhaps, since the beginning of humanity) even though she was equal to man in all her natural potentials.

But it may be asked that if the natural potentials of both groups were the same, why did society since the dawn of humanity decide to oppress her? Why and how did man succeeded in subjugating her in the first place? And why has this oppression never changed its course?

Western civilization, in spite of its keen desire to emancipate woman, has not succeeded in doing so. The data collected show that woman is far behind man in all those professions and activities which Islam has reserved for man, like ruling, judging and military service.

And as to what has been the fruit of this endeavour, the less said the better.

A DISCUSSION ABOUT MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Marriage is one of the fundamental sociological institutions. Mankind, since its very beginning, has been keeping to it without any disruption. Such an institution must have been based on the foundation of nature itself.

Islam has based its matrimonial laws on the correlation between masculinity and femininity. There is no need to emphasize that this complementary system created in man and woman — and it is the most intricate and interrelated system permeating their whole bodies — was not created in vain and without purpose. The male by his nature is attracted to the female and vice versa. And this system has only one goal in sight: reproduction and the continuity of the race. Marriage is based on this reality; and all its rules revolve around this axis. That is why Islam in its matrimonial laws has kept in view the fundamental principle of sexual interrelation; and on this principle are based the laws concerning chastity and conjugal rights; exclusive attachment of the wife to the husband and the rules of divorce and *'iddah;* legitimacy and parentage, the custody and upbringing of the children; inheritance and other related subjects.

Modern non-Islamic laws have laid the fondation of matrimony on a co-operation between husband and wife in their struggle for life. Marriage accordingly, is a co-operative institution much narrower than other such institutions like municipality etc.

It is for this reason that modern laws do not pay any attention to the rules of chastity etc., which are an integral part of the matrimonial laws of Islam.

This basis, co-operation in life, has given rise to a vast multitude of social problems and domestic upheavals. Apart from that, it is not in conformity with the realities of creation and nature. Why does a man want to join others and co-operate with them? It is because his well-being depends on countless things and innumerable actions which he alone cannot get and do. He is by necessity obliged to join hands with others. Consequently each person co-operates with the others, dividing labour and work according to their aptitudes. And all the required work is completed with their joint effort.

This development requires co-operation between any two persons — it does not specifically call for co-operation between a man and a woman. Therefore, building the edifice of matrimony is fundamentally wrong. Nature has based it on the need of procreation and not on social or domestic co-operation. Otherwise, there would not have been any need of any special laws for marriage; the general rules governing association and co-operation would have been enough. It would negate the virtue of chastity and fidelity, nullify the concept of legitimacy and affinity, and

abrogate the rules of inheritance — as communism has done. If we accept this ultimate result of the western philosophy of marriage, we would have to accept that all this complicated and interrelated system in the bodies of man and woman was created without any purpose.

This is a short review of the Islamic and western philosophies of marriage. More explanation will be given in some other relevant place.

So far as divorce is concerned, it is a thing which the *sharī‘ah* of Islam should be proud of. It has been made lawful and this legalization also is based on nature. There is nothing in nature to interdict it. Details of the conditions of its validity will be given in the chapter of ‘‘Divorce’’ (chap.55). Here it should be noted that today all the nations of the world (not excepting the Roman Catholic countries) have had to adopt this system in their civil codes, even though previously they ridiculed Islam on this account.

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أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ
اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ـ ٢٤٣ .

Did you not see those who went forth from their homes, and they were (in) *thousands, for fear of death; then Allāh said to them ''Die'';* (and) *afterwards He gave them life; most surely Allāh is Gracious to people, but most people thank* (Him) *not* (2:243).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *Did you not see those who went forth from their homes, and they were* (in) *thousands, for fear of death:* ''To see'', in this verse means ''to know''. It implies that the thing described here is so obvious that to know it is to see it. Other examples of this expression are: *Did you not see that Allāh created the heavens and the earth with truth?* (14:19); *Did you not see how Allāh has created the seven heavens one above another?* (71:15).

az-Zamakhsharī has said that the phrase ''Did you not see'' is an idiom used to express wonder and astonishment. It implies, ''Are you not surprised that . . .'' *''ḥadhara 'l-mawt''* (حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ) may mean 'for fear of death ' (as translated here) ; or it may mean, 'they were afraid

of death, a great fearing'.
QUR'ĀN: *Then Allāh said to them "Die";* (and) *afterwards He gave them life:* The order was 'creative', not 'legislative'. It does not mean that they did not die of a 'natural' cause, as the traditions say that they died of the plague.

Instead of saying, 'Then Allāh gave them death and afterwards gave them life', Allāh used this expression, because it more forcefully shows the effectiveness of His order and supreme domination of His power. The use of the imperative mood in matters of creation is a more forceful style; likewise, it is more eloquent and emphatic to use a news style while ordaining a legislation ("you shall not take other's property unjustly").

"Afterwards He gave them life" implies that they were raised from death to life, and that they remained alive for some time. Had they been resurrected just as an example and warning for others, or to complete the proof, or to explain some other reality, Allāh would have pointed it out, as is customary in the Qur'ān. (See, for example, the story of the people of the Cave.)

Moreover, the next sentence, "most surely Allāh is Gracious to people", also shows that they were not raised for only a short time.
QUR'ĀN: *But most people thank* (Him) *not.* The repetition of the word "people" here (instead of pronoun) reflects on the low level of their thinking. Moreover, the word "people" in the preceding sentence ("most surely Allāh is Gracious to people") refers to the particular group that was raised from dead; while in this sentence it stands for the whole of mankind.

This verse has some connection with the next verses which describe the importance of *jihād,* fighting in the way of Allāh — *jihād* also gives a new life to the nation when it is dead.

A commentator has said that this verse is a parable to illustrate the condition of the *ummah* — how it remains backward and dies when foreigners bring it under their yoke and keep it under their rule and domination, and how later on it rises to defend its rights and snatches its freedom from that colonial power; and thus becomes alive again. The following is the gist of his argument : —

"The verse does not refer to any historical event of either the Israelites (as many traditions say) or others (as some others say).

Otherwise, it would have been essential to mention that it happened in this or that nation, or to disclose the name of the prophet concerned, as the Qur'ān invariably does in all its stories. Moreover, the Torah also does not mention it in the history of the prophet Hezekial (a.s.). This proves that the traditions narrated in this connection are from Jewish mythology which were taken over by the Muslims.

''Apart from that, there is only one death and one life in this world, as is shown by the Qur'ānic words: *They shall not taste therein* (i.e., in the Paradise) *death except the first death* (44:56). *They* (i.e., the inmates of Fire) *shall say: ''Our Lord! Twice didst Thou make us subject to death, and twice hast Thou given us life''* (40:11). Therefore, there cannot be two lives in this world.

''Obviously, the verse is a parable: A nation was attacked by powerful enemies, who humiliated and subjugated them. The enslaved nation did not defend its freedom and went out of their homes, even though they were in thousands, in great numbers, but they were afraid of death. Thereupon Allāh said to them, ''Die, the death of disgrace and ignorance''. Because ignorance and inertia is death, as knowledge and self-respect is life. Allāh says: *O you who believe ! Answer* (the call of) *Allāh and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life* (8:24). *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* (6:122).

''The nation died, that is, they were disgraced and overcame by their enemies and remained in that condition. Afterwards, Allāh again gave them life, by inspiring them to rise against their oppressors and to defend their rights. So, they stood up and drove their oppressors out and became independent. Those were the people to whom Allāh gave life a second time, although so far as their identity was concerned, they were not the same people who had died the death of disgrace. But as both groups were of the same nation, Allāh counted them as one people who first died and then were raised to life again. Allāh has used similar expressions in various places in the Qur'ān. For example, He says, addressing the Jews of the Prophet's time: *And We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who subjected you to severe torment* (7:141). *Then We raised you up after your death that you may give thanks* (2:56).

''Lastly, if this verse were not taken as a parable, it would have no connection with the verses following it, which are about fighting in the way of Allāh.''

This interpretation is based on some patently false premises:

First: It is based on the rejection of miracles, or at least some miracles, like giving life to the dead. But we have proved the existence of miracles. Moreover, here we are dealing with the Qur'ān, and the Qur'ān loudly declares the existence of miracles, like raising the dead, etc. Even if we fail to prove such miracles through intellectual reasoning, the irrefutable fact remains that the Qur'ān believes in them.

Second: It claims that the Qur'ān proves the impossibility of more than one life in this world. But the verses describing the raising of dead (in the stories of Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, 'Īsā and 'Uzayr) clearly and definitely prove that dead animals and persons were again raised to life in this world.

Moreover, a life in this world is not to be counted as two lives simply because a death intervenes in between. The story of 'Uzayr is clear on this point: He remained dead for a hundred years; but on raising again he was not even aware of that death.

Third: It is a false assumption that the Qur'ān ought to have identified the nation or the prophet concerned, if it were the narration of a real event.

The style of speech differs according to its time, place and context. Sometimes details are given; on other occasions only a passing reference is made. For example, the Qur'ān refers to a people (without identifying them in any way): *Cursed be the fellows of the ditch of the fire* (kept burning) *with fuel, when they sat by it, while they were witnesses of what they did with the believers* (85:4 — 7). *And of those whom We have created are a people who guide with the truth and thereby do justice* (7:181).

Fourth: The claim that if this verse were not a parable it would have no connection with the subsequent verses, has no meaning at all.

The Qur'ān was revealed little by little, and there is no need to search for any connection between two adjacent verses unless they are clearly in one context and obviously revealed all together.

The truth is that the verse narrates a real event.

What style, eloquence and force would be in a verse which most of

the hearers believe to be a real event, while in reality it is but a parable having no factual basis at all.

Moreover, it is an invariable habit of the Qur'ān to distinguish a simile or parable from other modes of expression. For example: *Their parable is like the parable of one who . . .* (2:17). *The likeness of this world's life is only as . . .* (10:24). *The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah . . .* (62:5) and so on.

TRADITIONS

It is reported in *al-Iḥtijāj* from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he said, inter alia, in a tradition: ''Allāh made alive again a people who left their homes fleeing from the plague; they were innumerable. So Allāh gave them death for a long time until their bones decayed, their limbs disintegrated and they all became dust. Then Allāh sent a prophet, named Hezekiel, at a time when He wished to show him His creation. So He called them, and their bodies re-composed and their souls returned, and they stood up in the same shape as they had died, not a single one was missing from their group. Then they lived after that for a long time.

The author says: This interpretation has been narrated by al-Kulaynī and al-'Ayyāshī in some detail, and at the end of that tradition are the words, ''and about them was revealed this verse.''

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وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ -٢٤٤. مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ
اللهَ قَرْضاً حَسَناً فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافاً كَثِيرَةً وَاللهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْصُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ
-٢٤٥. أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيٍّ لَهُمُ
ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكاً نُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ
أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا
وَأَبْنَائِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلاً مِنْهُمْ وَاللهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ -٢٤٦
وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكاً قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ
الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللهَ
اصْطَفَيْهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَاللهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ -٢٤٧. وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ
فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَى وَآلُ هٰرُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلٰئِكَةُ
إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ -٢٤٨. فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ
قَالَ إِنَّ اللهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ
مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلاً مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ

وَالَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لاَ طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ
يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلاَقُوا اللهِ كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللهِ وَاللهُ مَعَ
الصَّابِرِينَ-٢٤٩ . وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْراً
وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ-٢٥٠ . فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللهِ وَقَتَلَ
دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلاَ دَفْعُ اللهِ
النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ
- ٢٥١ . تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ - ٢٥٢ .

And fight in the way of Allāh, and know that Allāh is Hearing, Knowing (244). *Who is it that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold, and Allāh holds and extends and to Him you shall be returned* (245). *Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel after Mūsā*, *when they said to a prophet of theirs. ‘‘Raise up for us a king* (that) *we may fight in the way of Allāh.’’ He said: ‘‘May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?’’ They said: ‘‘And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allāh, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children.’’ But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allāh knows the unjust* (246). *And their prophet said to them: ‘‘Surely Allāh has raised Ṭālūt to be a king over you.’’ They said: ‘‘How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?’’ He said: ‘‘Surely Allāh has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allāh grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allāh is Ample-giving, Knowing’’* (247). *And their prophet said to them: ‘‘Surely the sign of his kingship is, that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Mūsā*

and the family of Hārūn have left, the angels bearing it, most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe'' (248). *So when Ṭālūt departed with the forces, he said: ''Surely Allāh will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much* (of it) *as fills his hand;'' but with the exception of a few of them they drank from it. So when he had crossed it, he and those who believed with him, they said: ''We have today no power against Goliath and his forces.'' Those who thought that they would meet their Lord said: ''How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allāh's permission, and Allāh is with the patient ones''* (249). *And when they went out against Goliath and his forces they said: ''Our Lord, pour down upon us patience, and make out feet firm and help us against the unbelieving people''* (250). *So they routed them by Allāh's permission and Dāwūd slew Goliath, and Allāh gave him kingship and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. And were it not for Allāh's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allāh is Gracious to the creatures* (251). *These are the signs of Allāh: We recite them to you with truth; and most surely you are* (one) *of the apostles* (252).

* * * * *

GENERAL COMMENT

All these verses were obviously revealed together. The connection between the obligation of fighting, the exhortation of a goodly loan to Allāh and the moral of the story of Ṭālūt, Dāwūd and Goliath needs no explanation. The import of the verses is to show how fighting in the way of Allāh strengthens the collective life, what the spirit is by which a nation goes forward in its worldly and religious life, and what gives it its real happiness and felicity. Allāh declares that *jihād* is obligatory for the

Muslims, calls them to spend in His way, by contributing in preparation for war so that their military power increases and they are ready for their enemies. This spending has been called ‘‘lending to Allāh’’ because it is done in His way. Also, it very forcefully exhorts the hearers to spend in His way to gain nearness to Him. Then comes the story of Ṭālūt, Dāwūd and Goliath, so that the believers who are told to fight should take lessons from it. The moral is that the kingdom and victory belong to faith and piety, even if its adherents be small in number; and defeat and destruction is the fare of hypocrisy and sin, even if its followers be numerous. See how the Israelites lived in disgrace and servitude as long as they remained inert and idle, and were too lazy to do anyting to improve their condition. But when they stood up to fight in the way of Allāh and sought help from the word of truth, Allāh helped them to vanquish their enemy, even though only a few of them were really truthful. Look at the majority of them turning back when fighting was prescribed for them, and objecting to the appointment of Ṭālūt, and drinking from the stream, and saying that they had no strength to fight against Goliath and his armies. In spite of all these shortcomings Allāh made them victorious; they vanquished their enemy by the permission of Allāh; Dāwūd slew Goliath and kingdom was established in them. They were given a new life and their power and sovereignity came back to them. It was not but because of a word which faith and piety made them utter when they stood before Goliath and his forces: ‘‘Our Lord, pour down upon us patience and make our feet firm and help us against the unbelieving people.’’ Thus should the believers follow in the footsteps of the good people of previous nations, because they shall have the upper hand if they are believers.

COMMENTARY

QUR’ĀN: *And fight in the way of Allāh:* It makes fighting obligatory and compulsory. Here and everywhere in the Qur’ān, the order of fighting has the stipulation, ‘‘in the way of Allāh’’. It is to forestall any possible misunderstanding that this important religious duty was ordained to establish the worldly domination of the Muslims over other nations and to

spread the kingdom of the Muslim's — as many modern Muslim scholars think. The proviso, ''in the way of Allāh'', shows that this order was given to spread the domination of religion, by which the people could prosper in both worlds.

QUR'ĀN: *And know that Allāh is Hearing, Knowing:* It is a warning to the believers — they should not utter a single word against any order given by Allāh and His apostle, nor should they dislike in their hearts any such order as the hypocrites do. They should not be like the Israelites when they first objected about Ṭālūt, saying, ''How can he hold kingship over us . . .'', and then said, ''We have today no power against Goliath and his forces'', and retreated and turned away when fighting was prescribed for them, and drank from the stream after Ṭālūt had forbidden them to do so.

QUR'ĀN: *Who is it that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan, so that He will multiply it for him manifold:* The meaning of loan is wellknown. Allāh has named what is spent in His way as a loan to Himself, to exhort people to spend, and because it is done in His way, and also because it will surely be returned to them manifold.

The style has been changed from the imperative mood of previous verse (*And fight in the way of Allāh*) to the interrogative here (*Who is it that will lend?*) to refresh and enliven the mind of the audience — an order is always received with a feeling of helplessness, but not so an invitation and exhortation.

QUR'ĀN: And Allāh holds and extends and to Him you shall be returned: ''al-Qabḍ'' (القَبْضُ) is to hold a thing towards oneself. *al-basṭ* (البَسْطُ) is its opposite. *''al-Baṣṭ''* (البَصْطُ) is a rendering of *al-basṭ* — *'S'* (س) of which has been changed to *'Ṣ'* (ص) because it is joined to *'Ṭ'* (ط) which is pronounced with a full voice, and *Ṣ* also has a full voice.

This sentence mentions three attributes of Allāh: He holds, He extends and to Him all are to return. It is to remind the Muslims that whatever they spend, lending it to Him shall not be in vain, nor should they be surprised at how it will be increased manifold. Because Allāh holds and extends — He decreases whatever He pleases and increases whatever He pleases; and they are to return to Him, and then He will repay them the said loan a goodly repayment.

QUR'ĀN: *Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel . . . in the way of Allāh: al Mala'* (المَلَأُ) is said to mean a group of people

having the same opinion. It is derived from *al-mal'* (المَلْاءُ) to fill, because it fills the eyes by its greatness and prestige.

The request, ‘‘Raise up for us a king (that) we may fight in the way of Allāh’’, implies that the king, Goliath by name, had subjugated them and treated them so badly that they had lost all traces of a free life, like their homes and children. It happened after Allāh had saved them from the people of Pharaoh by raising among them Mūsā and making him their head, and after the rule of the successors of Mūsā had come to an end. Then the hardship increased to such an extent that their slumbering self-respect was awakened by the shock of it, and their elders went to a prophet of theirs asking him to raise for them a king to remove their internal differences and unite their power which had became ineffective because of disunity, so that they could fight under his command, in the way of Allāh.

QUR'ĀN: *He said: ‘‘May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?’’:* The Israelites had asked their prophet to raise for them a king, so that they could fight under him in the way of Allāh. But it was not in the power of the prophet; it was the prerogative of Allāh. That is why the prophet attributed the appointment and the order of fighting to Allāh. But he did not mention the divine name clearly. In their reply he questioned them about their possible disobedience, and he knew by divine revelation that they would surely disobey. Therefore, he did not mention the name of Allāh clearly, but only indicated that the authority is from Him and of Him only. How did he indicate it? By using the word ‘‘written’’ (lit. transl.: ‘‘if fighting is written on you’’) ; and writing, in the meaning of ordaining, is done only by Allāh.

Although, the prophet knew that they would not obey the command of Allāh, he put this matter in the form of a question, so that the proof might be completed against them by their protests of sincerity, as their reply showed.

QUR'ĀN: *They said. ‘‘And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allāh, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children’’:* Their dispersal from their homes meant that they could not manage their affairs, as they had been sent away from their ancestral abode. Thus, ‘‘turned out of our homes’’ alludes to their

inability to look after their homes and to benefit from them. It is this meaning that justifies the use of this verb, ‘‘turned out of’’ in connection with children.

QUR’ĀN: *But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allāh knows the unjust:* It is an offshoot of their prophet’s question (*May it not be that . . . you would not fight?*) and their reply (*And what reason have we that we should not fight?*). The words, ‘‘And Allāh knows the unjust’’, show that the question of the prophet was based on divine revelation that they would surely turn away from fighting.

QUR’ĀN: *And their prophet said to them: ‘‘Surely Allāh has raised Ṭālūt . . . he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?’’:* The announcement, ‘‘Allāh has raised’’ was a reminder to them that they were mistaken in asking the prophet to raise a king for them so that they would fight. The prophet attributed this raising to Allāh to teach them that it was a prerogative of Allāh.

The declaration about Ṭālūt prompted them to protest. In their eyes, Ṭālūt had two defects, which made him unfit for kingship. The first ‘‘disqualification’’ was alluded to in their words narrated by Allāh: ‘‘How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he’’. They did not think it necessary to elaborate why they were more deserving; it means that it was an obvious thing. The fact is that the house of prophethood and the house of kingship were well-known among the Israelites — the two houses were highly respected because of these two graces of Allāh. And Ṭālūt was from neither. That is why they objected that they — the people of the house of kingship or both kingship and prophethood — had a greater right to kingship than Ṭālūt; Allāh had put kingship in their family, how could they accept its transfer to someone else?

This objection was a result of their belief that Allāh cannot abrogate or change any of His orders; they said: the hand of Allāh is tied up. (Their hands be shackled!) Their prophet replied to this objection when he said: ‘‘Surely Allāh has chosen him over you.’’

The second ‘‘disqualification’’ is described in their words, ‘‘and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth’’. Ṭālūt was a poor man. Their prophet replied to it by saying: ‘‘and He has increased him

abundantly in knowledge and physique''.

QUR'ĀN: *He said. ''Surely Allāh has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique '': al-Iṣṭifā'* (الاِصْطِفَآءُ) and *al-istiṣfā'* (الاِسْتِصْفَآءُ) means to choose. Its root is *aṣ-ṣafw* (الصَّفْوُ = clearness, choice) ; *al-basṭah* (البَسْطَةُ) is expansion and power. These sentences are the replies to their objections:

Objection 1: They had a greater right of kingship than Ṭālūt because they were from the chosen family.

Reply: It was a distinction given to their family by Allāh. Now that Allāh has chosen someone else, he has a greater right than they; and now his family will have precedence over theirs and he has become nobler and higher in rank than they. The superiority follows the choice of Allāh.

Objection 2: ''and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth''.

Reply: Kingship is establishment of supreme authority over a group of people. Its only purpose is to unite the people under one will and join them together by creating a relationship with all of them. Everyone shall progress on the road of perfection without colliding with one another. No one shall be given preference without justice; no one shall be kept behind without justice. In short, kingship was created so that the ruler should manage the society in such a way that every member might reach his deserved perfection. To achieve that object, the king must have two qualities: (1) Knowledge of all that is good for his people and all that is bad; (2) Physical strength to implement and enforce what he thinks is good for the people.

Allāh points this out in the words, ''and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique''. So far as wealth is concerned, to count it among the necessities of kingship is foolishness.

Then He concisely put all these arguments in one sentence: ''and Allāh grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases''. The kingdom belongs to Allāh alone; nobody has any right in it, except what Allāh bestows from it on any one. Even then it really belong to Allāh only — see how the word ''kingdom'' is qualified here by possessive pronoun ''His''. When you keep this reality in view, you will know that Allāh has full authority to do in His kingdom as He pleases and as He wills. Nobody

has any right to say ‘why’ or ‘how’. One cannot ask why Allāh did this or that, because He is the Real cause; nor can one enquire how and by which means He did it, because Allāh is the Perfect cause and He does not need any supplementary causes. Therefore, the Israelites should not have asked why He transferred the kingdom from one family to another, or why He gave it to someone who had neither a big family nor abundant wealth.

It is true that Allāh bestows His bounty and grace as He wishes and upon whom He pleases. Still, it is not done at random or without reason. When we say, ‘‘Allāh does what He wishes and gives His kingdom to whom He pleases’’ we do not mean that Allāh does not have any object in view in His actions. Nor do we say that He acts haphazardly; that if there occurs any benefit from it, well and good, and if not, then what does it matter; -after all, the kingdom is His, He may do whatever He pleases. What we actually mean is this: Allāh is the final and real cause of every creation, with matter and without matter. Benefit and usefulness also, like all other things, are His creation. In view of this, Allāh, in His actions, cannot be governed by any aim and object, as we are; when He does a work (and whatever He does is good) or creates a thing (and whatever He creates is beautiful), His action is beneficial to His creatures. But He is not subservient to any benefit.

The above explanation serves to resolve the apparent contradiction in this verse: The authoritative declaration, ‘‘Allāh grants His kingdom to whom He pleases’’, seemingly cannot be reconciled with the reasons given earlier, ‘‘He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique’’. Had there been any discordance between His absolute power to do as He pleases, and His actions being full of benefit and reason, the two arguments could not be advanced side by side, let alone be complementary to each other.

The last sentence of the verse, ‘‘and Allāh is Ample-giving, Knowing’’, makes it even more clear. ‘‘Ample-giving’’ shows that He cannot be restricted by anyone or anything in bestowing His bounties or in any other action. ‘‘Knowing’’ shows that all His actions are done by His true knowledge which is never wrong. In other words, He does whatever He pleases, and He never does but what is beneficial.

‘‘Wāsi‘ ’’ (وَاسِعٌ = translated here as ‘‘Ample-giving’’) is the

active participle of *al-wus'ah* (الوُسْعَةُ) and *as-sa'ah* (السَّعَةُ) which is the capacity of a body to accomodate another body, like the capacity of a water-pot to hold water, that of a box for things packed in it, and that of a house to accomodate its residents. Then it was borrowed for riches: but not for every wealth and not in all conditions; it is used for riches when the possibility of spending and giving is taken into consideration. It is as though the wealth has the capacity to be spent and given. It is this meaning in which Allāh is called *al-wāsi'* (الوَاسِعُ), that is, the Possessor of wealth who has power to give whatever He pleases.

QUR'ĀN: *And their prophet said to them: ''Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there s tranquillity'': ''at-Tābūt''*(التَّابُوْتُ = translated here as ''Ark'') means chest. It is on the paradigm of *fa'lūt* (فَعْلُوتُ) from *at-tawb* (التَّوْبُ = to return).A chest is given this name because man returns to it every now and then.

MEANING OF ''AS-SAKĪNAH''

''as-Sakīnah'' (السَّكِيْنَةُ = tranquillity) is derived from *as-sukūn* (السُّكُوْنُ) which is opposite of movement. *as-sakīnah* is used for tranquillity of the heart. When a man is of stable mind and is not perturbed in taking a firm decision, he is said to have *as-sakīnah.* It is a virtue of a wise man who has a strong will. Allāh has made it a characteristic of *al-īmān* (الايْمَانُ = faith) in its higher degree, and has counted it as one of His most valuable gifts.

Man, according to his nature, bases his action on reasoning. He arranges logical premises, analyses the benefits of a particular action, and sees how it will effect the bliss of his life and bring the good of the society as a whole. Then he decides what to do and what not to do.

When man goes forward on the path of nature in the process of his reasoning, and his only aim is to gain real benefit and happiness in life, then his thinking is accompanied by peace of mind and tranquillity of heart without any nervousness and perturbation. On the other hand, if he clings in his life to the world and follows his low desires, he becomes confused,

and his thought and will-power are distorted by his unhealthy vision. As a result, he goes astray from the path of truth; or remains undecided, confused and irresolute in his decisions and cannot perform any difficult and dangerous task which requires strong will-power and firm feet.

A believing man, because of his belief in Allāh, relies on a firm support and an unshaking pillar of strength. He bases his life on true knowledge where doubt and confusion cannot intrude; sets forth in his actions in the light of divine commandments which he is sure are the most perfect guide. He knows that his affairs are not in his own hands; he is, therefore, not afraid of any possible loss; and if any harm comes to him, he is not sorry about it. He is not puzzled when he has to distinguish good from evil.

But a disbeliever has no guardian to look after his affairs. His good and evil are in his own hands. He wanders in the darkness of confusion, undecidedness and uncertainty, because his thoughts are permeated by low desires, spectres of unreality, and unhealthy feelings.

Allāh says :

. . .and Allāh is the Guardian of the believers (3:68). *That is because Allāh is the Guardian of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no guardian for them* (47:11).

Allāh is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into the light; and (as to) *those who disbelieve, their guardians are the Satans who take them out of the light into the darkness* (2:257).

Surely We have made the Satans to be the guardians of those who do not believe (7:27).

It is only the Satan that frightens his friends. . . (3:175). *The Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be niggardly, and Allāh promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance . . .* (2:268).

. . . and whoever takes the Satan for a guardian rather than Allāh, he indeed shall suffer a manifest lost. He gives them promises and excites vain desires in them; and the Satan does not promise them aught but (in) *deception . . .* (it is) *a promise of Allāh, true* (indeed); *and who is truer of word than Allāh?* (4:119 — 122).

Now surely the friends of Allāh — they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve (10:62).

These verses, as you see, put all fear, grief, perturbation and deception on the side of disbelief; and the opposite virtues on the side of faith.

Even more clear is the verse:

Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth? (6:122). It shows that the disbeliever gropes about awkwardly in his journey of life because he has fallen in utter darkness and cannot see any thing. But the believer has a divine light by which he sees his path and knows what is good for him and what is bad. It is because Allāh has bestowed upon him a fresh and new life in addition to this material life which he shares with the disbelievers. That new life accompanies this light which illuminates its path. Allāh says: *O you who believe! Fear Allāh and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you . . .* (57:28).

Again He says: *You shall not find a people who believe in Allāh and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allāh and His Apostle, even though they were their* (own) *fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk; these are they into whose hearts He has written* (impressed) *faith, and whom He has strengthened with a spirit from Him* (58:22).

It shows that this new life is from a spirit from Allāh, and is accompanied by a firm faith deeply impressed into their hearts. These believers are strengthened by a spirit from Allāh, which confirms the faith into their hearts, gives a new life to their bodies and creates a brilliant light to lead them forward.

It is easy to see that the import of this verse is similar to that of verse 4 of chap. 48: *He it is who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they might have more of faith added to their faith — and Allāh's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth, and Allāh is Knowing, Wise.*

''Tranquillity'' in this verse corresponds with the ''spirit'' in the previous one; and ''having more of faith added to their faith'' of this one corresponds with ''impressing the faith into their hearts'' of the previous one. This conformity becomes more obvious when we look at the

sentence, ‘‘and Allāh’s are the hosts of the heavens and the earth’’, because the Qur’ān often uses the term ‘‘hosts’’for the angels and the spirit.

Similar in the meaning are the verses: . . . *then Allāh sent down His tranquillity on His Apostle and on the believers, and made them keep the word of guarding* (against evil), *and they were entitled to it and worthy of it* (48:26); and *So Allāh sent down His tranquillity upon him and strengthened him with hosts which you did not see . . .* (9:40).

From the above discussion; it may be inferred that *as-sakīnah* is a divine spirit, or accompanies a divine spirit, by divine command; it creates tranquillity in heart, firmness of purpose and peace of mind. This does not involve us in far-fetched interpretations which would remove the word from its real meaning. And the traditions on this subject should be interpreted in this light.

QUR’ĀN: *And residue of the relics of what the family of Mūsā and the family of Hārūn have left, the angels bearing it . . . ‘‘al-Āl’’* (الأَلُ) of a man means those of his family who are most closely related to him; and, when used without any condition, it includes also the man himself. Therefore, the phrase here means Mūsā, Hārūn and their most closely related family-members. ‘‘The angels bearing it’’ shows the state of the Ark. The words of Allāh, ‘‘most surely there is a sign in this for those who believe’’, like the words at the beginning of the verse, prove that they had asked their prophet for a proof of the truth of what he had told them, ‘‘Surely Allāh has raised Ṭālūt to be a king over you.’’

QUR’ĀN: *So when Ṭālūt departed with the forces . . . they drank from it: ‘‘al-Faṣl’’* (الفَصْلُ) here means to depart from a place: the same is the meaning of the word in 12:94, ‘‘And when the caravan had departed.’’ Sometimes it means ‘‘to cut’’, that is, to separate two things, as Allāh says: *And He is the best of separaters* (between truth and falsehood) (6:57). Thus, the verb is used sometimes transitively and at other times intransitively.

The word *‘‘al-jund’’* (الجُنْدُ) signifies a dense concentration of something. The army is called *al-jund,* because people are densely concentrated in it. In this verse, the word is used in plural, and it shows that their number was very great — and this was after the people had ‘‘turned back except a few of them’’ (2:246).

The whole talk is a comment on the condition of the Israelites and how they ‘‘fulfilled’’ the covenant made with Allāh. All together they pleaded that a king be raised for them, and made a very strong covenant to fight under him; and they were so numerous that when they all turned back except a few of them, those few were ‘‘forces’’; and those forces also were of no avail because they drank from the stream; thus, what was left, was a residue of the residue, and among them were also those who had taken a handful of water, and as a result were overcome by cowardice and hypocrisy. And then Allāh declares how a handful of believers, who were forbearing in the way of Allāh, were given victory over the huge armies of Goliath.

‘‘al-Ibtilā’ ’’(الاِبْتِلآءُ) is to test; *‘‘al-nahar’’*(النَّهَرُ) is the place in which a stream flows; *‘‘al-ightirāf’’*(الاِغْتِرَافُ) and *al-gharf* (الغَرْفُ) is to raise a thing in the hand and get it, for example, raising water in the hand to drink it.

The position of the exceptional clause in this verse requires special attention: Allāh will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much (of it) as fills the hand. It would appear at the first glance that the words, ‘‘except he who takes with his hand . . .’’ should have come after the sentence, ‘‘whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me’’. But the fact is that this is not related at all with those who would drink from the stream. The Qur’ān mentions that those who would drink were not from Ṭālūt, and that is that. Then it changes the word ‘‘drink’’ to ‘‘taste’’ and says, ‘‘and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me’’. Only then comes the exceptional clause. Had this clause been put after the first sentence, ‘‘whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me’’, it would have signified that he who took only a handful of water was of Ṭālūt. This in its turn would have meant that the whole army from the beginning was of Ṭālūt, and then those who drank from the stream were cut off from him. But the present sequence, in which two categories have been mentioned — one of those who would drink and the other of those who would not drink — shows that the real position of the soldiers of the army was at that time undecided and unknown. It was only after the test of the stream that the reality was to be known. Those who would drink from it would be known to be not of

Ṭālūt; and those who would not even taste of it would be known to be of Ṭālūt. After these two separate sentences comes the exceptional clause, which removes those who would take a handful of water from the first group — but it does not put them in the second one. If there were only the first sentence, the exceptional clause would have given the meaning that by taking a handful of water one would not be cut off from Ṭālūt, that is, would remain of him. But now that two separate categories have expressly been mentioned, removal from one group does not automatically mean inclusion in the other. In short, the position of the exceptional clause shows the existence of three groups: those who were not of Ṭālūt, those who were of him, and the takers of handful of water. After crossing the stream, two later groups remained with Ṭālūt. That is why there appeared so much difference in their states; one group was forbearing, the other was restless; one had full confidence in Allāh, the other was perturbed and troubled.

QUR'ĀN: *So when he had crossed it . . . Allāh is with the patient ones.* *''al-Fi'ah''* (الفِئَةُ) means a group of people. A glance at the verses is sufficient to show that those who said, ''We have today no power against Goliath and his forces'', were those who had taken a handful of water; and those who replied them were those who had not tasted of it. ''Those who thought that they would meet their Lord'': The ''thought'' here means ''certainty'', that is, ''those who were sure . . .''. Also, it may be an allegorical style to show that in their humility they did not believe themselves worthy of meeting their Lord. They did not say, ''It is possible for a small party to vanquish a numerous host.'' Instead they said, ''How often has a small party vanquished . . .''. Thus they put forward a fact as their argument (instead of a theoretical possibility) to make the reply more convincing.

QUR'ĀN: *And when they went out . . . against the unbelieving people:* *''al-Burūz''* (البُرُوْزُ) is to appear. From it is derived *''al-barāz''* (البَرَازُ) which means to appear or set forth for battle. *''al-Ifrāgh''* (الإفْرَاغُ) means to pour a liquid material in a mould. In this invocation, they beg Allāh to pour down upon them patience according to their capacity. It is a very fine allegory. ''Make our feet firm'' is another allegorical expression which signifies determination, steadiness and firmness in front of the enemy, so that they do not flee from him.

QUR'ĀN: *So they put them to flight . . . taught him of what He pleased:* *''al-Hazm''* (الهَزْمُ) means to repel, to drive back.

QUR'ĀN: And were it not for Allāh's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allāh is Gracious to the creatures. It is obvious that the disorder of the earth means the disorder among those who are on the earth, that is, the disorder in human society. If society's disorder brings in its wake disorder on the earth's surface, it would also have to be included in the meaning of this verse, not because of itself but because of its being a result of society's disorder.

This verse hints at a philosophical reality, which is as follows:

The felicity and good of the human species is incomplete if there is no society and no mutual assistance. This factor depends on unity, to a certain degree, in society, so that various individuals may join together to form a single group. The group together becomes a single unit; metaphorically speaking, it becomes as though it has a single body and a single soul. It acts and reacts like a single individual. Social unity, and the place in which it occurs, that is, the assembly of human individuals, is just like unity in creation, and the place in which it occurs, that is, the universe. We know that unity in this system of creation results from the action and reaction occuring in the components of the universe. The various creative causes struggle with each other, repel, or are repelled by opposing forces, and it is as a result of this constant action and reaction that various parts of this system remain connected with each other. Otherwise, the universe would have ceased to exist.

Likewise, the system of human society is based on action and reaction, on repulsion and overpowering; otherwise the various members of society could not remain bound with each other, and society would have ceased to exist; in short the felicity of the species would have vanished. If we suppose that there is no repelling each other, in this meaning, (i.e., overpowering others and making them obey the victor's will), every individual member will do what he thinks fit, even if it goes against the interest of the other members (whether those interests are lawful is not our concern at this juncture); and those other members will have no means to prevent him from that course of action. Thus the unity of the members will cease to exist and society will be finished. We have described this subject fully under verse 2:213; where it was explained

that the basic factor upon which society is founded is the human instinct of subjugating others for one's own benefit; and mutual assistance and civilization is a side product of this instinct, it is a secondary cause.

This repulsion and overpowering is an overwhelming factor in human society. Man tries to make others do what he wants, and to repel them from what he does not like. It is seen in war as well as in peace, in comfort as well as in discomfort, in ease as well as in hardship. Man does it instinctively; he becomes conscious of it only when someone opposes his will, and then he begins the process of the said repulsion as he thinks necessary. That repulsion has degrees of strength and weakness. War is one of those degrees.

This natural instinct is seen in action when a believer repulses his oppressor in defence of his lawful rights; and it is also seen when someone uses it to protect his unlawful gains. Nature bestows its bounties on the believers and the unbelievers alike. It is not that a believer has a nature separate from that of the unbeliever. If this trait of repelling and overpowering were not present in human nature, no body would have defended anything, whether it be a lawful right or an unlawful gain.

It is this natural trait from which man gains so many benefits — first, society is founded on it, then he makes others follow his own will, and through it he keeps what he has gained, lawfully or otherwise; and it is through it that he tries to get back what has been taken from him unjustly; and lastly it is through this trait that he makes the truth live after it has died, and tries to keep society on the path of eternal bliss. In short, it is a natural factor from which man derives many more benefits than harm.

''Perhaps'' it is these things which are referred to in this sentence: *And were it not for Allāh's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder.* The next sentence supports this interpretation: *And Allāh is Gracious to the creatures.*

There are some interpretations which are not so appropriate:

Some commentators have said: The repulsion mentioned here means the repelling of the unbelievers by the believers, as the context shows. Also, another verse may be quoted in its support: *And had there not been Allāh's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and*

mosques in which Allāh's name is much remembered (22:40).

Comment: The meaning in itself is correct as far as it goes; but it is not the whole meaning. What the verse means by the good of the earth, is a comprehensive and continuous good which keeps society alive; not any particular good which appears for a short time and then disappears, like in the story of Ṭālūt and in some other events.

Others have said: This verse refers to the fact that Allāh saves the sinner from perdition and destruction, because of the righteous one. Many traditions from both Sunnī and Shī'ite chains of narrators mention this fact: A tradition of jābir is recorded in *Majma'u 'l-bayān* and *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*, that he said: ''The Apostle of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: 'Verily Allāh, because of the good of a Muslim man, makes good his child and the child of his child, and the people of his house, and of the houses around it; and they remain in the protection of Allāh so long as he remains in them.' ''

Another tradition, in *al-Kāfī* and *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī, quotes aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) as saying: ''Verily Allāh, repels (the misfortune) from that of our Shī'ahs who does not pray, because of the one who prays, and if they all unite on neglecting the prayer, all of them would perish. And verily, Allāh repels from that of our Shī'ahs who does not pay *zakāt*, because of the one who pays it, and if they all unite on its non-payment, all would perish. And verily, Allāh repels from that of our Shī'ahs who does not perform *hail,* because of the one who performs it, and if they all unite on neglecting the *ḥajj*, all would perish.''

Comment: The two verses mentioned earlier obviously do not fit the meaning of these two traditions; although it may be said that these traditions give examples as to how Allāh repels some people by some others.

Someone has said: The verse means that Allāh repels the oppressors with other oppressors.

Comment: Its absurdity is to obvious.

QUR'ĀN: *These are the signs . . . you are* (one) *of the apostles:* This verse is a sort of epilogue to conclude the story. Also the last sentence, ''and most surely you are (one) of the apostles'', creates a clear connection with the next verse.

TRADITIONS

‘Abdu’r-Razzāq and Ibn Jarīr have narrated from Zayd ibn Aslam that he said: ‘‘When the verse was revealed: *Who is it that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan, so He will multiply it . . .* , Abu ’d-Daḥdāḥ came to the Prophet and said: ‘O Prophet of Allāh! Do I not see our Lord asking a loan from us from the same which He has given us for ourselves?! And verily I have two plots of lands, one in the higher region, and the other in the lower one; and verily I dedicate the better one as *ṣadaqah* (alms).’ And the Prophet used to say: ‘How many pampered clusters of dates Abu ’d-Daḥdāḥ has got in the Garden!’ ’’ (*ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*)

The author says: This tradition has been narrated through numerous chains.

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ‘‘When the verse was revealed: *Whoever brings good deed, he shall have better than it* (27:89), the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘O Allāh! Increase for me.’ So, Allāh sent down the verse: *Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it* (6:160). The Messenger of Allāh (again) said: ‘O Allāh! Increase for me.’ Then Allāh revealed, *Who is it that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold.* Thereupon, the Messenger of Allāh knew that ‘‘many’’ from Allāh cannot be counted and has no limit. (*al-Ma‘ānī*)

The author says: aṭ-ṬabarsĪ in *Majma‘u ’l-bayān* and al-‘Ayyāshī in his *at-Tafsīr* have narrated a similar tradition. And a tradition nearly like it has been narrated from Sunnī chains also.

The words of the Imām, ‘‘Thereupon, the Messenger of Allāh knew’’ : The end of the verse hints at it, ‘‘and Allāh holds and extends’’, because no limit can be put on the bounty of Allāh; He has said: *And the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20).

A tradition of Abu ’l-Ḥasan (a.s.) recorded in *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī says that this verse is about the gift for the Imām.

The author says: A similar tradition is narrated from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) in *al-Kāfī;* it gives an example of a general rule.

Majma‘u ’l-bayān says about the words of Allāh, ‘‘when they said to a prophet of theirs’’ that the prophet was Ushmu’īl who is Ismā‘īl in

Arabic.

The author says: Sunnī traditions also confirm it. And Ushmu'īl is Samuel of the Bible.

al-Qummī narrated from his father from an-Naḍr ibn Suwayd from Yaḥyā al-Ḥalabī from Ḥarūn ibn Khārijah from Abū Ja'far (a.s.) saying: ''Verily, the Israelites, after the death of Mūsā, indulged in sins, and changed the religion of God, and acted arrogantly against the commandments of God; and there was a prophet among them, who ordered them (to do good) and forbade them (evil), but they did not obey him. (And it is narrated that he was the prophet, Armiah [1] — may the peace of Allāh be upon our prophet and him!) Thereupon, Allāh gave Goliath mastery over them; and he was a Coptic.[2] He humiliated them, and killed their men, and turned them out of their homes and their properties, and kept their women as slave-girls. Therefore, they resorted to their prophet and said: 'Ask Allāh to *raise up for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allāh.'* And there was the prophethood in one house of the children of Israel and kingship and rulership in another house. And Allāh had not kept the prophethood and kingship in one house; that is why they asked their prophet to 'raise for us a king, so that we may fight in the way of Allāh.' Thereupon their prophet said to them: *'May it not be that if fighting is ordained for you, you would not fight?'* They said: *'And what reasons have we that we should not fight in the way of Allāh, and we have indeed been turned out of our homes and our children.'* And it happened as Allāh said: *But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them; and Allāh knows the unjust.* And their prophet said to them: *'Surely Allāh has raised Talut to be a king over you.'* Then they were enraged by this (appointment), and said: *'How can he hold kingship over us, while we have a greater right to kingship then he and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?'* And the prophethood was in the house of Lāwi[3], and the kingship in the house of Yūsuf; and Ṭālūt was from the house of

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[1] Jeremiah, in the Bible.

[2] Goliath was a Philistine. The area had political connection with Egypt. Perhaps it is in this sense that he has been called a Coptic.

[3] Levi, in the Bible.

Binyāmīn[1] , the full brother of Yūsuf, and was, thus, from neither the house of prophethood nor from that of kingship. Then their prophet said to them: *'Surely, Allāh has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allāh grants His Kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allāh is Ample-giving, Knowing.'* And Ṭālūt was the greatest of them in physique, the most powerful and knowledgeable of them all, but he was a poor man. So, they vilified him because of his poverty, and said that he had not been given an abundance of wealth. Thereupon, their prophet said to them: *'Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Mūsā and the family of Hārūn have left, the angels bearing it.'* And it was the chest which was sent by Allāh and Mūsā's mother put him in it and threw it in the river; and it was among the Israelites and they sought blessings through it. When Mūsā was about to die, he put inside it in the tablets, and his coat of mail and whatever signs of prophethood he had, and gave it in trust to his successor, Yūsha'.[2] And the Ark remained in them until they made slight of it, and the children played with it in the streets. Thus, the Israelites remained with honour and dignity as long as the Ark was with them, but when they committed sins and profaned the Ark, Allāh took it away from them. When they asked their prophet, Allāh raised Ṭālūt as king over them, and he let them in the fight then Allāh returned the Ark to them, as he said: *'Surely the sign of his kingship is that there shall come to you the Ark in which their is tranquillity from your Lord and residue of the relics of what the family of Mūsā and the family of Hārūn have left, the angels bearing it.' ''* And he (Abū Ja'far) said: ''The residue is the children of the prophets.'' (*at-Tafsīr*, al-Qummī)

The author says: The sentence, ''And it is narrated that he was the prophet, Armiah'' is another tradition, parenthetically inserted in this trandition.[3]

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[1] Benjamin, in the Bible.

[2] Joshua, in the Bible.

[3] As mentioned in a previous tradition, the prophet was Samuel, and not

‘‘And it happened as Allāh said’’: It means that a majority of them turned back and only a small minority of them obeyed the order to fight. And some traditions say that this minority was sixty thousand souls. It has been narrated by al-Qummī in his *at-Tafsīr* (al-Qummī narrated from his father from al-Ḥusayn ibn Khālid from ar-Riḍā, a.s.) and by al-‘Ayyāshī in his *at-Tafsīr* from al-Bāqir (a.s.).

‘‘And the prophethood was in the house of Lāwī and the kingship in the house of Yūsuf.’’ Some people say that the kingship was in the house of Yahūdhā.[1] But there is an objection on it: There was no king among the Israelites before Ṭālūt, Dāwūd and Sulaymān. So how can it be said that ‘‘before Ṭālūt’’ kingship was in the house of Judah? This objection is strengthened by the traditions of the Imāms of *Ahlu ’l-bayt* that the kingship was in the house of Yusuf, because the kingship of Yūsuf is accepted by all.

‘‘The residue is the children of the Prophets’’: This sentence is a conjecture of the narrator. The Imām explained the words, ‘‘the family of Mūsā and the family of Hārūn’’ with the words, ‘‘the children of the prophets’’; and the narrator fancied that it was the explanation of the word, ‘‘residue’’. And this view is supported by the tradition recorded in the *at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) was asked about the words of Allāh, ‘‘and residue of the relics of what the family of Mūsā and the family of Hārūn have left, the angels bearing it’’, and he replied: ‘‘The children of the prophets.’’

Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā narrated from Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad from Muḥammad ibn Khālid and al-Ḥusayn ibn Sa‘īd from an-Naṣr ibn Suwayd from Yaḥyā al-Ḥalabī from Ḥarūn ibn Khārijah from Abū Baṣīr from Abū Ja‘far (a.s.) saying in a tradition, inter alia: ‘‘And Allāh reports the words of Ṭālūt: *‘Surely Allāh will try you with a stream; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me.’* But all of them drank from it, except three hundred and thirteen men, among them were those who took a handful of water as well as those who did not drink at all. When they went out against Goliath, those who had

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Jeremiah.

[1] Judah, in the Bible.

taken handful of water said, *'We have today no power against Goliath and his forces';* and those who had not taken it said, *'How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allāh's permission, and Allāh is with the patient ones.' ''* (*al-Kāfī*)

The author says: That there remained with Ṭālūt only three hundred and thirteen men (equal in number to the Muslim ''army'' in the battle of Badr) is mentioned in numerous traditions from Shī'ah and Sunnī chains. The details that those who said: ''We have today no power . . .'' were those who had taken a handful of water, and those who said, ''How often a small party . . .'' were those who had not tasted it at all, may be inferred from the position of the exceptional clause in the verse, as we have already explained.

al-Kulaynī narrated through his chains from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad from al-Ḥusayn ibn Sa'īd from Faḍālah ibn Ayyūb from Yaḥyā al-Ḥalabī from 'Abdullāh ibn Sulaymān from Abū Ja'far (a.s.) who said about the words of Allāh, *surely the sign of his kingdom . . . the angels bearing it:* ''They bore it in the shape of a cow.'' (*al-Kāfī*)

It will have been noted that we have quoted the complete chain of narrators of this tradition, although generally we do not do so in this book. We omit the chains where the traditions are in conformity with the Qur'ān, because then there is no need to mention the chains of narrators. But where the tradition mentions a thing which is not in the Qur'ān, and which cannot be inferred from it, then it is necessary to quote the complete chain. Still, we write in this book only those traditions which are correct according to the chains of the narrators, or are supported by the context or other associations.

al-'Ayyāshī writes in his *at-Tafsīr* a tradition from Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''Dāwūd had four brothers; and their father was an old-aged man; and Dāwūd had remained behind to look after the sheep of his father. Ṭālūt departed with his forces. Dāwūd's father called him (and he was the youngest) and said: 'O my son! Take to your brothers this (food) which we have prepared for them, so that they may get strength to overcome their enemy.' And he (Dāwūd) was short of stature, dark, with very little hair, but pure of heart. So, he went away, and (by that time) the two forces had reached near to each other.''

At this juncture, another tradition of Abū Baṣīr says that he heard the

Imām saying: ‘‘Then Dāwūd passed by a stone, and it said: ‘O Dāwūd! Take me and kill Goliath with me, because, verily, I have been created to kill him.’ So he took it and put it in his bag in which he kept the stones for his sling which he used in the herding of his sheep. On entering the army camp, he heard them greatly magnifying the affair of Goliath. So he said to them: ‘Why are you so overwhelmed by his affair? By Allāh! If I see him I will kill him.’ Thereupon, they started talking with each other about it till he was brought before Ṭālūt. Ṭālūt asked him: ‘O young man! How much strength do you have? And what experience have you of yourself?’ Dāwūd said: ‘It happens that if a lion attacks a goat of my herd and catches it; then I overtake him, catch his head, open his jaws and rescue the goat from his mouth.’ (Hearing this) Ṭālūt said: ‘Bring me a full-size coat of mail.’ It was brought unto him and he put it in Dāwūd’s neck, and lo! His body filled it completely. Thereupon, Ṭālūt and those Israelites who were present there were awe-struck by him; and Ṭālūt said: ‘By Allāh! Most probably Allāh will kill him (Goliath) by him.’

‘‘When the morning came and people gathered around Ṭālūt, and the people (of the two forces) stood against each other, Dāwūd said: ‘Show me Goliath.’ When he saw him, he took the stone, and putting it in his sling, threw it towards him, and it hit him between his eyes, reaching to his brain; and (Goliath) fell down from his stead; and people cried: ‘Dāwūd has killed Goliath.’ Then the people made him their king until nobody was heard talking about Ṭālūt. And the Israelites gathered around Dāwūd; and Allāh sent down Zabūr to him, and taught him the handicraft of iron, making it soft for him; and ordered the mountains and the birds to join him in glorifying God.’’ The Imām said: ‘‘And nobody was given a voice like him. Thereupon Dāwūd lived among the Israelites, hidden from them; and he was given strength to worship (God).’’

The author says: The Shī‘ah and Sunnī traditions unanimously say that Dāwūd killed Goliath by a sling.

‘Alī (a.s.) said: ‘‘The tranquillity which was in the Ark, was a pleasant breeze from the Garden; it had a face like that of a human being.’’ (*Majma‘u ’l-bayān*)

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr* — from Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah and Ibn Jarīr, through the chain of Salmān ibn Kuhayl from ‘Alī (a.s.); — and from ‘Abdu ’r-Razzāq and

Abū ‘Ubayd and ‘Abd ibn Ḥamīd and Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Ḥākim (and he has said that the tradition is ‘‘correct’’), and Ibn ‘Asākir and al-Bayhaqī (in his *ad-Dalā’il*), through the chain of Abū al-Aḥwaṣ from ‘Alī (a.s.).

al-Qummī narrated from his father from ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Khālid from ar-Riḍā (a.s.) saying: ‘‘The tranquillity is a breeze from the Garden, it has a face like that of a human being.’’ (*at-Tafsīr*)

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated by aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) in *Ma‘ānī ’l-akhbār* and by al-‘Ayyāshī in his *at-Tafsīr* from ar-Riḍā (a.s.).

These traditions explaining the meaning of *as-sakīnah* (tranquillity) are not *mutawātir;* yet, if they are accepted as correct, they may be interpreted in the following way, so as to fit the meaning of the verse of the Qur’ān:

‘‘The tranquillity has a face like that of a human being.’’ It means that it is one of the stages of spiritual perfection. At that stage, the soul remains tranquil and at peace with the commands and decrees of Allāh. Such expressions, explaining a reality in an allegorical way, are found in many traditions of the Imāms’. According to this interpretation, tranquillity would mean the spirit of faith, and that is the meaning we have given to it earlier. And it is in this light that the following tradition of Abu ’l-Ḥasan (a.s.), mentioned in *Ma‘ānī ’l-akhbār,* should be seen and interpreted: ‘‘(Tranquillity) is the spirit of God, which speaks; when they differed among themselves on any matter, it spoke up and informed them (of truth). . .’’ Obviously, it means that it is the spirit of faith and it guides the believer to the truth about which the people differ.

A PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIAL DISCUSSION ABOUT THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE AND THE SURVIVAL OF FITTEST

According to scientists, scientific experiments show that existing things struggle with each other for their existence, because it is ingrained in their nature to protect themselves from extinction, and to make use of their powers in the purpose for which they are created. This struggle is

carried on through mutual action and reaction — each influences the others, and is in its turn influenced by others. In the end, the more powerful and more perfect being vanquishes the weaker and the less perfect one. It means that nature goes on selecting, among individuals of a species, the fittest and the most perfect, and it alone is allowed to continue and propagate the species and all others gradually become extinct. Thus we get two laws of nature: the struggle for existence, and natural selection and survival of the fittest.

As the society is based on the demands of nature, the abovementioned two laws are found in civilization also.

The best society is the one which is based on the foundation of a complete and firm unity; in which the rights of the individuals and groups, and of society in general, are well-balanced and well-preserved. Such a society has more right to survive; and others lacking in these qualities deserve to perish and vanish. Experience has shown that only those nations do survive which look well after their collective duties, and proceed, fully alert, on the road of collective bliss and felicity. On the other hand, when disunity creeps into a nation, hearts become disunited, differences crop up, tyranny and mischief poison the atmosphere, the lords of the land indulge in luxuries and the will to strive for a cause is weakened in them, and, as a result, the nation or group is obliterated from the face of the earth.

Archaeologists have unearthed fossils, bones and skeletons of many animals which have become extinct, like the brontosaurus; or from whose species only a few examples have survived like alligators and toads. The only factors which led to their extinction were the laws of the struggle for existence, natural selection and survival of the fittest. Likewise, the species which are found today are constantly changing because of the said struggle and survival; and only the fittest and strongest deserves to survive. Then those strong and good traits are transmitted to the next generations, and thus the species continues to develop and flourish.

According to them, that is also how evolution initially began. Matter was scattered in space, and when it joined together, the stars, the planets and the species living therein came into being. Then what was fit for survival survived and existence passed on from generation to generation; and what was unable to withstand the struggle of stronger beings was

destroyed.

This, in short, is the theory of the scientists.

Later scientists have had their own objections against this theory. There are even today many weaker species, both in animals and in vegetables, that go on flourishing. For example, man has domesticated and developed many species of vegetables and animals, these varieties are definitely fitter and stronger than their natural counterparts. Yet the natural varieties go on reproducing and transmitting their weak traits to the next generations. This phenomenon shows that the supposedly basic natural laws of struggle for existence, natural selection and survival of the fittest are not comprehensive.

This difficulty led later scientistists to invent a new theory and that is adaptation to the environment. ''Environment'' covers all the surrounding conditions of time and space and factors which influence the state of a thing. The nature of thing adjusts itself to the surrounding influences. That is why every living thing, be it in the water or on dry land, in polar regions or in the equatorial zone, has limbs and faculties which are suited to that particular environment. If a life adjusts itself to the influences of its environment, it continues; otherwise, it is finished. The previously mentioned two laws — the struggle for existence, and. natural selection and survival of the fittest — should be based on this basic law of adaptation to the environment; and where this latter law is isolated, the former two laws, even if their conditions are fulfilled, cannot save a species.

The difficulty is that even this law is not comprehensive, as scientists themselves admit.

The fact, as admitted by science, is that these laws are correct to a certain extent, but they are not comprehensive and all-inclusive.

A comprehensive philosophical interpretation can be offered in the following way:

All that happens in this material world, whether it is the existence of a thing or the changes and alterations occurring in it, revolve around the law of cause and effect. Every material being tries to influence other things to make it agreeable to itself. The net result of this action is that every active agent takes some thing from the object of its action to add to its own perfection. Thus every thing is constantly engaged in preserving its

existence. To this extent, it may be accepted that there is a struggle for existence and survival in this world.

A strong active agent either changes a weaker object to suit its own needs or destroys it completely for the same purpose. Had that weaker object been stronger, it could have faced the opposite forces and preserved itself from the forced changes and destruction. To this extent, it may be accepted that there is a law of natural selection and survival of the fittest in this world.

When many causative factors gather around an object, and all, or most, of them combine to create an effect on the said object, it cannot escape from their combined force, and has to adjust itself accordingly. To this extent, the law of adaptation to the environment must be accepted.

But it must be remembered that these laws effect (in the thing which is capable of being effected) only that object's accidental properties and supplementary factors. It cannot change the thing *per se* into another thing.

Materialists do not believe that there are separate genera and species, completely different from eath other. They think all things are basically the same — one matter, and that the different shapes are the result of different accidental properties; and it is only by these accidental or supplementary factors that species differ from each other. Otherwise, there is no basic difference between them. Every thing, after disintegration, returns to the same state — matter. It is because of this view, that they said that a species changes into another through the above-mentioned laws. We shall discuss this view, God willing, in an appropriate place.

To come back to our original topic:

A commentator of the Qur'ān has said that the verse: *And were it not for Allāh's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allāh is Gracious to the creatures,* points to the laws of the struggle for existence and natural selection. According to him other two verses also point to the same laws: *Permission* (to fight) *is given to those upon whom war is made, for they have been oppressed, and most surely Allāh is well able to assist them. Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allāh. And had there not been Allāh's repelling some people by*

others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allāh's name is much remembered; and surely Allāh will help him who helps Him (i.e. His cause) ; *most surely Allāh is Strong, Mighty. Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay the zakāt and enjoin good and forbid evil; and Allāh's is the end of the affairs* (22:39 — 41).

According to him, this verse points to the struggle for existence and for the defence of the truth; and that this struggle leads to the survival of the fittest and preservation of the beat.

The second verse, which he put for his argument, is verse 17 of chap. 13: *He sends down water from the heavens, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of* (making) *ornaments or apparatus arises a foam like it; thus does Allāh compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth; thus does Allāh set forth parables.* According to the said commentator, this verse signifies that the torrents of the happenings and the scale of the struggle throws away and nullifies the scum of falsehood which might have harmed society, and the pure gold of truth, beneficial for society, remains. It clearly shows the law of the survival of the fittest in action.

The author says: The laws of the struggle for existence and natural selection (in the meanings mentioned earlier) are correct to a certain extent, and also it is agreed that the Qur'ān supports them in the said meaning. But the two types of verses quoted by the said commentator have nothing to do with these two laws.

The first type of verse was revealed to show that Allāh's will cannot be defeated; and that the truth, that is, religious beliefs and knowledge as confirmed by Allāh, shall always prevail; and likewise, the standard-bearer of that truth shall always vanquish falsehood. To see the purpose of the verse, look again at the phrases, ''for they have been oppressed, and most surely Allāh is well able to assist them'' and ''Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say, Our Lord is Allāh''. The purpose of those clauses is to make it clear that the believers shall be victorious; but not because of the struggle for

existence and the survival of the fittest. We should not forget that the strongest and the fittest, in the language of these laws, means the one who is the strongest and fittest in the physical and material sense; it does not mean strong in truthfulness or fittest in the spiritual sense. According to these two laws whoever is better equipped with military hardware and more trained and better disciplined, will vanquish the weaker party — it makes no difference which party is in the right and which in the wrong. But these verses tell us that the believers shall be victorious because they have long been oppressed for speaking the truth, and Allāh is truth and He shall help the truth to prevail; falsehood shall not be able to withstand the proof of truth; Allāh Himself shall assist the bearer of truth if he is sincere in his heart. The next words show this aspect clearly: ‘‘and surely Allāh will help him who helps Him; most surely Allāh is Strong, Mighty. Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer . . .’’ It shows that their confession of truth is based on sincerity. Then Allāh ends the verse on the words, ‘‘and Allāh’s is the end of the affairs.’’ This sentence reminds one of many Qur’ānic sentences which prove that creation is relentlessly progressing on the path of perfection towards truth and real felicity and bliss. Doubtlessly, the Qur’ān proves that victory is for Allāh and His forces only: *Allāh has written down, I will most certainly prevail, I and* My *apostles* (58:21), *And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the apostles, Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones* (37:171 — 173) and: *and Allāh is predominant over His affair* (12:21).

In all these verses, victory has been reserved for the people of sincere faith and true belief, irrespective of their physical or material strength, while the laws of struggle and survival are based on physical and material strength and fitness.

Likewise, the second verse, quoted by the said commentator, which describes the parable of pure water and gold in contrast to the foam and scum, is revealed to show that truth shall last and falsehood shall go away. How? It does not say. It may be by physical struggle as in the case when truth and falsehood are both of a material kind. On the other hand, it may not be governed by the law of struggle, if either truth, or falsehood, or both are of the spiritual, and not the material, world. Allāh

says: *And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God* (20:111); *Whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him* (2:116); *and that to your Lord is the goal* (53:42). Thus, Allāh is victorious and predominant over all things, and. He is the One, the Subduer.

It has already been explained that the verse under discussion, ''And were it not for Allāh's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder'', points to that reality upon which society. is based. Man's instinct for subjugating others for his own benefit. This reality includes, to a certain extent, in the meaning accepted by us earlier, the laws of the struggle for existence and natural selection. But the basic law, which is also comprehensive, is the same instinct of subjugating others. And the verse should be interpreted in this light. It should not be based on two partial and non-comprehensive laws.

Let us look at this topic from another angle: The two laws — the struggle for existence and natural selection — demand that plurality be replaced by singularity. Both sides of the struggle aim at annihilating the opposite party, so that the victor may add to itself the advantages of the vanquished party's existence and its attachments. And nature, by its selection aims at keeping alive only the best. The net result will be to vanquish and annihilate many and to let only the one, that is, the best and the fittest, survive. This is basically against the concept of society, because society is formed of a multitude, all of whom are expected to co-operate with, and help, each other. It is this natural law which is the basis of society and civilization, not those laws which exhort one man to eat up the other. The repelling which, as mentioned under verse 2:213, builds nations and protects them from mischief, is that repulsion which leads to togetherness and that unity which is based on plurality. It is not that repulsion which negates togetherness, nor is it that unity which destroys plurality.

The *jihād* and fighting ordained by Allāh develops the earth and protects it from chaos, disorder and mischief, because it is through this fighting that the collective rights of the oppressed and down-trodden people are revived; and not because it shatters unity, annihilates people and obliterates their foot-prints. This basic difference between the two theories must always be kept in mind.

HISTORY AND HOW MUCH THE QUR’ĀN IS CONCERNED WITH IT

Oral and written history has been the favourite subject of people since the beginning of humanity. So far as we are aware, there have always been some persons who remembered, wrote or otherwise transmitted the great and small events of the past to the generations who came later, and who preserved what they were given by the ancients. Man benefits from history in various fields of his life: society comes to know its origin; people take lessons from the achievements and failures of the past generations; events are used as stories, for information and amusement; political, economic and industrial guide-lines are charted out in the light of the experience of the past.

In spite of all these benefits, which in themselves would be enough to bestow on history a halo of virtuousity, two factors have always worked to divert it from the path of truth and reality:

First: History has always been a slave of the rulers of the time. Every government wants to advertise what is beneficial to it and to suppress the report of what may be harmful to its interests. It keeps its dark side either completely hidden or alters its details and presents falsehood disguised as truth.

Second: Even the historians, reporters, narrators and writers of the books of history can never be free from their feelings and prejudice. In the past, the historians and the governments were, on the whole, people who believed in one or another religion, and at that time, religious prejudice and national feelings tainted historical writings. Now-a-days, materialism and nationalism occupy the same place, and the reports of past and present events are seen through these glasses. Ancient writers seldom wrote anything that could damage the religious faith of their contemporaries. Modern writers seldom write anything without injecting into it some items to support their materialistic view.

Apart from these two basic factors, there were and are other difficulties which have put history into disrepute. In the old times, there were scarcely any tools to record, preserve, transmit, copy, edit and preserve historical material. Now, with the progress of technology, all such tools are in the hands of historians; but a new enemy has

overpowered them, and that is professional politics. The same event is reported in ten or twenty ways, depending on the nationality and political leaning of the reporters.

These glaring defects have robbed written history of its value. Now scholars have more confidence in archaeological evidence than in written records. Even in that field, national feelings and prejudice play their part. And politics dictate how much should be disclosed, and even what interpretation should be put on archaeological discoveries.

So, this is history and its various defects which can never be glossed over or corrected. With this background, we should never compare the historical events mentioned in the Qur'ān, with the narrations of the same events given in the books of history. The Qur'ān is a divine revelation, free from mistake and falsehood. How can it be judged with the help of history, the history which nobody believes to be free from lie and error? Many historical events, as given in the Qur'ān, like this very story of Ṭālūt, differ from the reports in the Bible. But why should we worry? The Bible is no better than other history books; The alterations, suppressions, additions and omissions carried out in these books are too well-known to need any description. The story of Samuel and Saul was written in the Bible by an unknown hand. The story of Ṭālūt in the Qur'ān is the true words of Allāh.

This much about history in general. Now let us see what is the main object of the Qur'ān in such narrations. The Qur'ān is not a book of history, nor does it describe an event with all its details as a book of history purports to do. The Qur'ān is divine speech, poured into the mould of revelation, ''With it Allāh guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety.'' That is why it does not narrate an event from the beginning to the end with all its details. It only picks out a few such points of an event as will be useful to the listener as a lesson, sermon and moral. Look for example at this very story. It begins with the words, ''Did you not see the chiefs of the children of Israel'', and then picks out the following points as highlights: ''And their prophet said to them: Surely Allāh has raised Ṭālūt to be a king over you''; ''And their prophet said to them, Surely the sign of his kingdom is . . .''; ''So when Ṭālūt departed'' ; ''And when they went out against Goliath . . .'' Obviously if one wants to write the fully story of Ṭālūt, one will have to add many

paragraphs between all these highlights. But the Qur'ān is not interested in a story *per se.* We have mentioned this fact in the story of the cow, and this principle applies to all other Qur'ānic stories. It selects for description only that much which is needed to stress some points in moral lessons, wise teachings and spiritual guidance, or to show how Allāh dealt with ancient nations and the people who passed away before the Muslims. Allāh says:

In their stories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding (12:111).

Allāh desires to explain to you, and to guide you into the ways of those before you (4:26).

Indeed there have been examples before you; therefore travel in the earth and see what was the end of the rejectors. This is a clear statement for men who guard (against evil) (3:137 — 138).

There are many similar verses.

* * * * *

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ
دَرَجَاتٍ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ
اللهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَٰكِنِ اخْتَلَفُوا
فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوا وَلَٰكِنَّ اللهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا
يُرِيدُ - ٢٥٣ . يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ
لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ - ٢٥٤ .

These apostles, We have made some of them to excel others; among them are some to whom Allāh spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank); *and We gave clear* (evidence) *to 'Īsā, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allāh had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them; but they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied; and if Allāh had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allāh does what He intends* (253). *O You who believe! Spend out of what We have given you, before the day comes in which there is no bargaining, neither any friendship nor intercession; and the unbelievers — they are unjust* (254).

GENERAL COMMENT

These two verses do not differ much in context from the preceding verses which ordained fighting and spending in the way of Allāh. Then came the story of Ṭālūt, in this context, so that the believers might learn important lessons from it, and that story ended on the words, ‘‘and most surely you are one of the apostles’’ which are immediately followed by the opening sentence of this verse, ‘‘These apostles, We have made some of them to excel the others.’’ Thereafter, it describes why those who came after those apostles fought one with another. (In the story of Talut also, there was a restrictive phrase, ‘‘after Mūsā’’ to describe ‘‘the chiefs of the children of Israel’’.) Then it reverts to the exhortation of spending in the way of Allāh before the fmal day comes.

All these similarities in context strongly support the view that these two verses are connected with the previous ones, and that all of them were sent down together.

The verse purports to remove a common misunderstanding, which is as follows:

The apostleship, especially when it was accompanied by clear evidence, that is, arguments and miracles to prove its truth, should have ended the scourge of fighting. It could have happened in one of the two ways: (1) When Allāh sent the apostles and gave them clear signs for the specific purpose of guiding people to their bliss in both worlds, it would have been proper if He had also prevented them from fighting among themselves and united them all in the truth. So, why is there so much fighting going on among the followers of those apostles? This objection becomes all the more telling after the advent of Islam which counts unity as one of the pillars of its *sharī‘ah* and the basis of its laws. (2) The sending of the apostles and the giving to them of the clear signs was done for the specific purpose of creating faith in peoples’ hearts. Belief and faith is a spiritual characteristic, which cannot be created by force and coercion. Then what the use of fighting once the prophets and the apostles had been sent.

We have explained this objection together with its reply in the commentary of the verses of fighting.

In this verse, Allāh gives the following reply: The fighting among the

followers of the apostles occurred because the said followers differed among themselves. Had they not differed, there would not have been any fighting among them. The cause of the fighting was, therefore, their difference. It is true that if Allāh so wished, there would not have occurred any difference; and thus there would not have been any fighting. Alternatively, He could have disconnected the cause, that is, the difference, from its effct, that is, fighting; so that even if there was difference, there would not have occurred any fighting. But Allāh does what He wishes; and He has decreed that the effect will follow its cause; also, that the people will have freedom of choice, and that there will not be any compulsion for them to follow a certain course.

And that is why they differed, and were not prevented from it, and that is why the said difference caused the fighting.

COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *These apostles, We have made some of them to excel the others:* It demonstrates the greatness of the apostles and the grandeur of their status. That is why the demonstrative pronoun *''tilka''* (تِلْكَ = those) has been used, which is meant to point to a distant object. The verse shows the excellence given by Allāh to some of them over others — some of them have been given more excellence than the others. But all of them are great, as the apostleship in itself is an excellence, which all of them share. There is a difference among the apostles, of their grades and ranks; and there is a difference among their followers, as the verse describes. But the two types of differences have nothing in common: The difference among the apostles is only in their ranks and grades, but they all are one in the basic excellence of apostleship; and the conflict of the people of the apostles is the one which is found between belief and disbelief, between affirmation and negation. It goes without saying that the two differences are quite separate from each other. And that is why Allāh has used separate words for each. The difference in the rank and grade of the apostles has been named excellence, and it has been attributed to Allāh, ''We have made some of them to excel others''. The conflict of the followers of the apostles has been called a difference,

and it has been attributed to the men themselves, ‘‘they differed’’.

The verse ends on the topic of fighting, and the preceding verses were also concerned with admonition to fight in the way of Allāh, and with a story about it. It obviously means that the sentences under discussion, ‘‘These apostles . . . with the holy spirit’’, are a prologue to make the meaning of the next sentences clearer. It shows that the institution of apostleship, in spite of all its blessings and good, has not been able to end fighting among the people, because the said fighting is initiated by the people themselves.

The apostleship has a high, towering excellence; and its good and bliss have ever-lasting freshness; whenever you look at it you will see a new beauty, and whichever aspect you ponder upon, you will find a new virtue. This excellent institution, in spite of its brilliant splendour and awe-inspiring magnificence, in spite of its accompanying clear evidence and miracle, is not able to eradicate the differences of people in belief and disbelief. It is so, because this difference is caused by the people themselves. Allāh has mentioned this fact in various verses: *Surely the religion with Allāh is Islam; and those to whom the book had been given did not differ, but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves* (3:19). *Mankind was but one nation. . . and none differed about it but the very people who were given it revolting among themselves* (2:213).

The fact remains that if Allāh had so wished He could have prevented this difference and the resulting fighting by His creative decree. But Allāh has established a system of cause and effect in the universe, and difference is the established cause of conflict and fighting. Also, if He had so wished, He could have forbidden it by His legislative decree; or He could have refrained from giving the believers the order to fight in His way. But He gave this order; and made it a criterion of faith, ‘‘so that Allāh may separate the impure from the pure’’, ‘‘and most certainly Allāh will know those who believe and most certainly He will know the hypocrites’’.

In short, fighting among the people of the apostles cannot be avoided, as there is always the possibility of people differing because of envy and revolt. The apostleship and its clear evidence are sufficient to refute wrong beliefs and clear away doubts. But envy, revolt, obstinacy and

other such moral defects cannot be removed and the earth cannot be purged of them except by fighting in the way of Allāh, which will better the condition of humanity. Experience proves that in many cases arguments alone were not effective unless they were supported by the sword. That is why Allāh ordered His apostles, whenever necessary, to stand in support of truth and fight in His way. He so ordered in the days of Ibrāhīm and the prophets of the children of Israel, and after the Apostle of Allāh came. More details have already been given under the verses of fighting.

QUR'ĀN: *Among them are some to whom Allāh spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree* (of rank): In these sentences the pronouns and verbs have been changed from the first person of the preceding one (*We have made some of them to excel*) to the third person. The reason — and Allāh knows better — may be as follows:

Meritorious epithets are of two kinds: First, that which in itself is enough to show the merit and honour of the person or thing so described; for example, the clear evidence and the miracle, and being strengthened with the holy spirit, which has been mentioned in respect of 'Īsā (a.s.). There is no doubt that these epithets are, *per se,* splendid and lofty. Second, that which in it-self has no value unless it is related to a great subject, and its merit and honour depend upon the prestige of the doer; for example, being spoken to, *per se,* has no virtue, but if one is spoken to by a great personality it bestows an honour to the man who is spoken to. And it carries a very great splendour if one is spoken to by Allāh. Likewise, being raised in rank, *per se,* has no virtue unless it is done for example, by Allāh.

In this light, we may easily appreciate the great eloquence of the Qur'ān in changing the pronouns in three sentences: ''among them are some to whom Allāh spoke, and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank) ; and We gave clear (evidence) to 'Īsā . . .'' When Allāh described the virtues of being spoken to and being raised in rank, He changed the pronouns to the third person clearly mentioning the name, 'Allāh', as the bestower of these merits. When the epithets reached clear evidence, etc., which were honoured in themselves, the pronouns reverted to the first person of the starting sentence and said: ''and We gave clear evidence to 'Īsā son of Maryam''.

The commentators advance various opinons as to who is meant by the two sentences. It is said that ‘‘some to whom Allāh spoke’’ refers to Mūsā, as verse 164 of chap. 4 says: *And We spoke to Mūsā* (directly) *speaking* (to him), and as several other verses testify. Also, it is said that it means the Apostle of Allāh, Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.), because Allāh spoke to him on the night of the ascension when Allāh brought him near Himself to such a degree that all intermediate links vanished completely, and Allāh addressed to him His revelation directly without any intermediary. He says: *Then he* (i.e., Muḥammad) *drew near, and he became pending* (i.e., in between the Creator and His creatures); *so he was the measure of two bows or closer still. And He revealed to His servant what He revealed* (53:8 — 10). A third interpretation is that the speaking means revelation in general, because revelation is a secret speaking, and it has been termed speaking in the verse, *And it is not for any man that Allāh should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger so that he reveals by His permission what He pleases* (42:51). But this last interpretation does not conform with the preposition *‘‘min’’* (مِنْ = from, among) which denotes that not all, but only ‘‘some’’, of the apostles were given this distinction — and revelation was not confined to only a few of them, it was common to all.

The most appropriate interpretation is that it refers to Mūsā (a.s.), because Allāh’s speaking with him was already mentioned in a chapter of Meccan period (which was revealed long before this chapter 2, which is a Medinite chapter): *And when Mūsā came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him . . . He said: ‘‘O Mūsā! Surely I have chosen you above the people with* My *message and with my speech . . . ’’* (7:143-144). Obviously the fact that Mūsā was spoken to by Allāh had been well-understood when the verse under discussion was revealed.

Likewise, various interpretations have been offered for the sentence, ‘‘and some of them He exalted by degree (of rank)’’.

It is said that it refers to Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.), as Allāh raised him in status and exalted over all the apostles, because He:

— sent him towards all the men —: *And We have not sent you but to all the men . . .* (34:28);

— made him a mercy to the worlds —: *And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds* (21:107);

— made him the Last of the prophets —: . . . *but he is the apostle of Allāh and the last of the prophets* . . . (33:40);

— gave him the Qur'ān, which is the guardian over all books and explains clearly everything, and is protected from the alterations of wrong-doers, and, in short, is a miracle which will last up to the end of the world —: *And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the book and a guardian over it* (5:48); *And We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything* . . . (16:89); *Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian* (15:9); *Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'ān, they could not bring the like of it, even though some of them were aiders of the others* (17:88).

— and gave him especially the established and upright religion which is responsible for all the good of this world and the next —: *Then set thy face upright to the established religion* (30:43).

Another interpretation is that it refers to various prophets who were raised in status in one way or the other. For example, the following prophets:

Nūḥ (a.s.) — : *Peace be on Nūḥ in all the worlds* (37:79).

Ibrāhīm (a.s.) — : *And* (remember) *when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: ''Surely I will make you Imām for mankind . . .''* (2:124); *And make for me a truthful tongue* (i.e., goodly mention) *among the posterity* (26:84);

Idrīs (a.s.) — : *And We raised him to a high station* (19:57);

Yūsuf (a.s.) — : *We raise the degrees of whomsoever We please* (12:76);

Dāwūd (a.s.) — : *And We gave to Dāwūd Psalm* (4:163); and likewise various other prophets.

A third interpretation is that the words, ''These apostles'', in the beginning of the verse, refer to those apostles only who have been mentioned in this chapter of the Cow, like Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, 'Īsā, 'Uzayr, Armiah, Ushmu'īl, Dāwūd, and Muḥammad, the peace of Allāh be on them all. Out of them Mūsā and 'Īsā have especially been mentioned in this verse, and from among the rest it is Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.) who has been raised in degrees of rank over the others.

A fourth interpretation: ''These apostles'' refers to only those who

have been mentioned in the preceding story; and they are Mūsā, Dāwūd, Ushmu'īl and Muḥammad. Mūsā's distinction has been mentioned, and that is his being spoken to. Then comes the topic of raising the degrees of rank, and from the above list, no one is more deserving for it than Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.). Probably, that was the reason why 'Īsā had to be mentioned in this verse by name — because in the preceding story he was not mentioned at all.

But a well-balanced interpretation would be as follows:

There is no doubt that the exalted rank of the Prophet, Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.), is included in the meaning of this sentence; but there is no reason to suppose that the sentence refers only to his excellence or only to those prophets who are mentioned in the story of Ṭālūt or in the chapter of the Cow, because all such view are arbitrary and without any justifiable reason. It is quite obvious that the verse is general; ''these apostles'' refer to all the apostles sent by Allāh, and ''some of them He exalted by degrees of rank'' covers all those apostles who were exalted by Him in any way.

Someone has said: The context shows that the sentence, ''some of them He exalted . . .'', refers only to Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.). The verse gives a lesson to those nations that fight among themselves, after their apostles, even though their religion is one — and only three such nations were present when the verse was revealed: the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims. Therefore, it was appropriate to mention their apostles especially; Mūsā and 'Īsā have already been described in the verse, and it means that the remaining sentence, ''some of them He exalted . . .'', specifically refers to Muḥammad (s.a.w.a.).

Comment: The Qur'ān decrees that all the apostle were sent to all of mankind, as Allāh says: . . . *We do not make any distinction between any of them* . . . (2:136). The apostles brought them clear signs, arguments and miracles. This fact in itself should have been enough to cut at the root of mischief and disorder, and to prevent fighting among their followers. But those followers differed with one another because of their rebellion, envy and worldly desire. This was the basic cause which gave rise to the fighting. Therefore, Allāh ordains fighting when the good of mankind depends upon it, so that He may manifest the truth of what was true by His words, and cut away the root of the wrong-doers.

This context shows that the verse is not particularly concerned with any nation; rather its import is general.

A TALK ABOUT THE SPEECH OF ALLĀH

The sentence, ‘‘among them are some to whom Allāh spoke’’, shows that Allāh did speak to some people; it proves that an actual occurrence did happen, that it is not an allegory or analogy; and that Allāh has named that occurrence His ‘‘speech’’. We shall discuss this subject in two parts:

First: The words of Allāh prove that all the blessings, bounties and distinctions which Allāh has reserved for His prophets and apostles and which are hidden from other people’s perception, like revelation, speaking, the descent of the spirit and the angels, and the witnessing of the great divine signs; as well as the things which He has informed His prophets and apostles about, like the angels, Satan, the Tablet, the Pen, etc., are actual and factual things. There is no allegory in their claims: when they said ‘‘angels’’ they did not mean ‘‘mental powers calling towards good’’; when they talked about ‘‘revelation’’, they were not referring to ‘‘the products of those mental powers’’; the holy spirit and faithful spirit, in their language, were not used for ‘‘the highest degree of those mental powers from which pure thoughts rain down for the good of the human society’’; Satan and jinn were not allegorical names for ‘‘base desire and unjustified anger which call towards evil and disorder’’; ‘‘the whispering of slinking Satan’’ was not another name for ‘‘the evil thoughts which disrupt a good society or make one commit bad actions’’; and so on.

The Qur’ānic verses, as well as the declarations of the previous prophets, show in the clearest way that they used these words in their actual meanings, not in an allegorical style. Nobody, except an obstinate and reckless contender, can have any doubt about it — and we have not undertaken to convince such a contender! If such clear expressions were to be explained away in this way, then all the spiritual facts given by these apostles could be interpreted in purely materialistic terms, totally rejecting existence beyond the matter! We have discussed it in short in

the topic of miracle.

Anyhow, divine speech is a factual and actual thing, and it creates the same result which is created by our talking. It may be explained as follows:

Allāh has named some of His actions ‘‘speech’’ and ‘‘speaking’’: *And Allāh spoke to Mūsā* (directly) *speaking* (to him) (4:164); *among them are some to whom Allāh spoke* (2:253). And He has explained this vague expression in the verse: *And it is not for any man that Allāh should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger so that he reveals by His permission what He pleases* (42:51). The exceptional clause, ‘‘except by revelation . . .’’, would be meaningless unless the speaking (mentioned in ‘‘should speak to him’’) is taken to mean real speaking. It then follows that the speaking by Allāh is real, even though it may have a special style and method. In short, the principle of ‘‘speaking’’ by Allāh is a reality and cannot be denied.

What is the reality of speech from our point of view? Man needs society and civilization, and, as a result, needs all the essential ingredients of co-operative civilization — and ‘‘speaking’’ is one of them. Nature has guided man to express his thoughts through the medium of the voice which is produced from his mouth. He has made various combinations of his voice as signs to describe various ideas which are produced in his mind. Needless to say that the only way to convey hidden ideas and thoughts to others is to appoint, and agree upon, some signs for them. Man needs. speech because there is no method to understand, and make others understand, other than words, the variously mixed and combined sounds which have been agreed upon as signs, and made as tokens for objects and ideas. That is why a language is closely related to the developmental stage of the society which it serves. When the society develops, the language also widens its circle to cope with it. In this manner, languages develop and widen their circles in direct relation with the development stages of the respective societies.

Speech makes others understand what is in the mind of the speaker, through the medium of combined sounds; these sounds have been agreed upon, by the speaker and the listener, as tokens and signs to convey certain ideas.

It follows that man develops speech when he is with other men.

(Also, some animals who live together in colonies, and who have voices, use some particular sounds to express some particular feelings. This may be called their speech.) If there were a man completely cut off from other human beings, he would not need any speech, because there would be no need to communicate with others. Likewise, other creatures, who do not need any society or co-operation in their existences, do not need speech; two examples of this category are the angels and Satan.

It is certain that the speech of Allāh does not emanate from Him as it does with us. The human voice issues from the larynx and arrives at particular sounds by movements of the tongue, teeth, jaws and lips, and interaction between them. And, what is more, our speech is only a sign or token which we have agreed upon; sounds, *per se,* have no value or meaning if there be no prior agreement as to what they mean. But Allāh is too great in splendour and too high in glory to have any limb or organ, or to need help from such things as words, which have no real worth at all — whose value depends upon the agreement of the speaker and the listener. Allāh has said: *Nothing is like a likeness of Him* (42:11).

Still, Allāh in the verse mentioned earlier, (*And it is not for any man that Allāh should speak to him except by revelation . . .* — 42:51), confirms for Himself the reality of speaking, although He disallows for Himself that speaking with which we are familiar. Allāh dissociates Himself from that speech which is known to us and whose only value is that of a token or sign — which depends on agreed upon meanings. But He confirms speech for Himself with its particular effect. As the particular effect is the same, that is, making the other party understand the message, it can be called ''speech'' although it has no resemblance to our speech. It is like the words, scale, lamp and armament, which were made in old days for certain primitive tools and implements, and are now equally correctly used for new types of machine scales, electric bulbs and modern military hardware, because their effects are the same, even though the shapes are completely different.

The method by which Allāh lets His apostles and prophets know what He intends to convey to them is His speech. But we have not been told what is its reality and how it happens. But, in any case, its effect is the same: making the listener understand the intended message.

Divine speech is a divine action, like His other actions — giving life

and death, sustaining, guiding, forgiving, etc. In other words, it is an attribute of action, not an attribute of person like knowledge, power and life. (The attributes of persons are not other than the person-himself). As ''speaking'' is an attribute of action, like other such attributes, it may be described in terms of space and time. Allāh has said: *And when Mūsā came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: ''My Lord: show me* (Thyself), *so that I may look upon Thee.'' He said: ''You can never see Me''* (7:143); *. . . and indeed I created you before when you were nothing* (19:9); *. . . then Allāh said to them, Die;* (and thereafter) *He gave them life* (2:243); *We give sustenance to you and to them* (6:151); *. . Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it* (20:50); *then He turned to the* (mercifully) *that they might turn* (to Him) (9:118). In these verses the speech of Allāh is qualified by the time and the place of its occurrence, like His other actions, e.g., creating, giving death, life and sustenance, guiding and turning towards His servants with mercy.

This explanation is enough for *tafsīr*, which is the subject of our book. We shall comment shortly afterwards on theological disputes and philosophical arguments concerning this topic.

Here another aspect of this subject should be looked into. Allāh has not used the words ''speech'' and ''speaking'' except about His talk with human beings. Of course, ''word'' and ''words'' have been used in other contexts. He has said: *The Massiah, ʻĪsā son of Maryam is but an apostle of Allāh and His word which He communicated to Maryam* (4:171). Here, ''word'' has been used for a human being himself. Also He says: *And the word of your Lord that is the highest* (9: 40); *And the word of your Lord has been accomplished truly and justly* (6:115); *. . . the words of Allāh will not come to an end* (31:27). In these verses, ''word'' and ''words'' mean the decree of Allāh, or some sort of creation.

The word, ''saying'', has been used by Allāh referring to His talk with human beings as well as with others. He says in connection with His talk:

— with man: *So We said: ''O Adam! Surely this is an enemy to you and to your wife''* (20:117);

— with angels: *And when your Lord said to the angels: ''I am*

going to place in the earth a khalīfah'' (2:30); *When your Lord said to the angels; ''Surely I am going to create a man from dust''* (38:71);

— with Satan: *He said: ''O Iblīs! what prevented thee that thou shouldst do obeisance to him whom I created with My two hands''* (38:75);

— with inanimate things: *Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: ''Come both, willingly or unwillingly.'' They both said: ''We come willingly''* (41:11); *We said: ''O Fire! be cold and a safety to Ibrāhīm''* (21:69); *And it was said: ''O earth! swallow down thy water, and 0 sky! withhold* (thy rain). . .'' (11:44).

All the above, with their diversity, are included in the following two verses:

His command, when He intends anything is only that He says to it: 'Be' and it is (36:82).

. . . when He has decreed a matter He only says to it: 'Be' and it is (19:35).

We find that Allāh uses the word, ''saying'', about His address to those who have reason and hearing power, like man, as well as to inanimate things which do not have such powers (as we understand them) like the earth and the sky. Also, it is clear that the last mentioned two verses are a sort of explanation to the previously mentioned verses.

On pondering on all these aspects, one finds out that the divine ''saying'' means creating a thing to show the intended meaning. So far as the matters of creation are concerned, when Allāh creates a thing and brings it into existence, it exists. And the very thing is a ''saying'' of Allāh, because it, by its existence, shows the particular intention of Allāh for its creation. It is known that when He intends a thing and says to it : 'Be' and it comes into being, no word passes from the Creator to the thing created; there is in fact only the existence of the thing, and nothing else. Therefore, that is the thing created, and also it, in itself, is the word 'Be'. In short, His saying, in matters of creation, is the creation itself, it is nothing separate from it.

In matters other than creation — for example, when He says something to .a man — it means that He creates something which gives that man an inner knowledge of the intended message. It may be by

creating a voice in a body (like in the tree, for His talk with Mūsā; and in the curtain of light, in the case of the Prophet Muḥammad - s.a.w.a.); or by some other method which we do not know, or whose modelity we do not understand.

The same is, more or less, the case of His speaking to the angels or Satan. But there is an important difference.

Unlike our existence, the existence of the angels and Satan is not biological and social. As a result, they do not achieve gradual perceptive perfection as we do. They do not have to make signs and tokens to indicate their intentions. When they want to understand, or make someone else understand, a thing it is not done through the medium of the voice. There is no combined sound, emanating from the larynx with inter-related actions by various parts of the mouth; and, also, there is no hearing, through a hole called the ear, receiving the sound from the air and conveying it through an intricate mechanism to the brain. Still, the reality of ‘‘saying’’ exists in both groups — and in their like, if there by any. And, as explained earlier, that reality is ‘‘making the addressee understand the intended message.’’

In short, among the angels, as well as among the Satans, there is ‘‘saying’’, but not like ours. Likewise, between Allāh and the angels (and between Him and the Satans) there is ‘‘saying’’ but not through the medium of voice and word.

In the same way, we may explain the ‘‘saying’’ which is attributed in the Qur’ān to the animals. For example, Allāh says: . . . *an ant said: ‘‘O ants! enter into your dwellings . . . ’’* (27:18); . . . *then said* (the hoopoe): *‘‘I comprehend that which you do not comprehend, and I have brought to you a sure information from Sheba’’* (27:22).

The same meaning may be applied in the cases where Allāh ‘‘says’’ or ‘‘reveals’’ something to such animals. For example, *And your Lord revealed to the bee,* (saying): *‘‘Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build’’* (16:68).

There are some other words synonymous, or near in meaning, to ‘‘saying’’ and ‘‘speaking’’; for example, revealing, inspiring, informing and relating. Allāh says:

Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nūḥ and the prophets after him . . . (4:163).

And (I swear by) *the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it* (91:7 — 8).

He (the Prophet) *said: ''Informed me the All-knowing, the All-aware''* (66:3).

He relates the truth . . . (6:57).

The explanation, written in the beginning about the speech of Allāh, applies to these words also: There is an actual and factual occurrence which Allāh has named His , speaking, revealing and inspiring etc.; and it has the same effect that speaking, etc. has; it makes no difference whether we know its reality or not. (We shall have some further discussion about Revelation in chapter 42, God willing).

Even though the basic meaning is common to all the abovementioned words, their use is determined by context, and its suitability for the literal meaning. An utterance is called ''speech'' when the main emphasis is on conveying the message to the listerner's mind; that is why this word had been used when Allāh wanted to show the excellence and high status of the prophets, because, in this context, the emphasis is on communicating which naturally draws the attention to the recipient of the communication. It is called ''saying'' when the main attention is on the intended meaning; and it is for this reason that the creative and legislative decrees and commandments are called ''saying'': *He said, ''The truth then it is and the truth do I speak, that I will most certainly fill hell with thee and with those of them who follow thee, all''* (38:84 — 85). And it is called ''revelation'' when it is hidden from others; and, therefore, the communication of the message to the prophets is named thus: *Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nūḥ and the prophets after him . . .* (4:163).

Second: How is the word ''speaking'' used? In the beginning, words were made for phenomena which can be perceived by one of the five senses. Gradually the meanings shifted towards those meaning which could be perceived by the mind only. When a word is made for a material thing is used for a mental process or a metaphysical meaning, it is in the beginning done with allegorical sense; but the continued use makes the latter its real meaning. Likewise, the advancement of civilization and technology amends, improves and changes the tools and implements

which are used by man. But even with such continuous changes and improvements, the name does not change. In old days, a ‘‘lamp’’ was a metal or earthen receptacle containing oil or fat in which a wick was placed and then lighted for illumination at night. From stage to stage it changed shape, technique and source of light; and now we have these electric bulbs, in which not a single thing of the original ‘‘lamp’’ remains. Still, we call it and similar other things ‘‘lamp’’ because the purpose is the same; this apparatus illuminates the night as the original lamp did. So long as this basic purpose is served by a new apparatus the original name, ‘‘lamp’’, is transferred to it in reality, not allegorically, even if all appearances have changed.

This example shows that a word is easily transferred to a change or new shape of the original form if the purpose of the original remains unchanged, and that this also will be its ‘‘real’’, and not ‘‘allegorical’’, meaning. Today, there are thousands and thousands of old names used for new items, and these names are treated as their real ones, not allegorical; because, in spite of radical changes in shapes and techniques, the original purpose has remained intact. Likewise, in every language there are countless words which were made for material things, and were later used for metaphysical objects — in reality, not as an allegory.

It shows that when the words ‘‘speaking’’ and ‘‘saying’’ are used in places where the effect is ‘‘letting the audience know the message’’ they are used in their real meaning. It is for this reason that we said earlier that when ‘‘saying’’ or ‘‘speaking’’ was attributed to Allāh, it was used in its real sense. It is the same with other words which are used sometimes for Allāh, and at other times for human beings, like life, knowledge, will, giving, withholding, etc. As the net result and effect of these words is found in the person and actions of Allāh, they are attributed to Him in their real meanings, even though their modelity and other aspects are totally different from what we understand from these words.

The same is the explanation of ‘‘exalting the apostles by degrees of rank’’. This exalting is a real thing, and not just a thing found in the mind of the speaker. We have already explained the difference between real existence and the existence in mind, under the heading ‘‘Knowledge and Action’’ under verse 2:213. We gave there the example of the phrase ‘‘a man who is president’’. Now ‘‘a man’’ has a real existence, but his ‘‘being president’’ is a thing found in the minds of people only. Such

aspects have no existence outside the mind.

Many sincere men of religion have fallen into the error of thinking that this exalting by Allāh is also like the above-mentioned presidency. Once they had committed themselves to this explanation, they had to say that the effects of that exalting (for example, the things of the next world — paradise, hell, the questioning, the reckoning etc.) had the same relationship with this exalting as the parapharnalia of the presidency have with the said office — that the said relationship was, so to say, in the mind of the speaker only; it had no existence outside. They did not realize that such an explanation lowers the dignity of God, reducing Him to a position of sub-ordinate to His own suppositions and thoughts — Glorified is He from such sacrilegious imputations. Such people, because of that basic error, are not ready to believe that the prophets of Allāh and His chosen servants have been give some really-existing spiritual perfections, which the Qur'ān and the traditions clearly attributed to them; these people try to interpret such verses and traditions in such a way as to rob them of their real existence and turn them into the above-mentioned things which exist only in the mind.

QUR'ĀN: *And We gave clear* (evidence) *to 'Īsā, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit:* In this sentence, the original ''first person'' pronouns have been used; and we have already explained the reason for this. A question arises as to why only 'Īsā, and no other prophet, has been mentioned here by name. The reason is this: What has been mentioned in his excellence — giving clear evidence and strengthening with the holy spirit — are things common to all apostles. Allāh says: *Certainly We sent Our apostles with clear evidence* (57:25); *He sends down the angels with spirit by His commandments on whom He pleases of His servants,* (saying): *Give the warning* . . . (16:2).

But these otherwise common factors were found in 'Īsā in a rather special way. All his miracles — raising the dead, creating the bird by breathing into it, giving sight to the blind, curing lepers and giving information of the unseen — had a very special relation with the life and the spirit. Therefore, those factors were mentioned as the special excellence of 'Īsā, and his name was clearly mentioned. Had Allāh only said, ''and We gave clear evidence to some of them and strengthened him with the holy spirit'', it would not have pointed especially to 'Īsā,

because, as you know, these two factors were common to all apostles. It was necessary to mention the name to show that these were given to ‘Īsā in a rather special way. Moreover, ‘Īsā himself was a clear evidence of the power of Allāh, as he was born without a father. Allāh says: *and made her* (Maryam) *and her son a sign for the worlds* (21:91). Thus, the son and his mother together were the signs of Allāh, and it was their special distinction.

QUR’ĀN: *And if Allāh had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them'':* Here Allāh again refers to Himself in the third person, because the context demands a clear declaration that the divine will cannot be obstructed and His power cannot be foiled. All happenings, in all their positive and negative aspects, are under divine control and authority. It is the attribute of godship which emanates unlimited power and unrestricted authority; and that is why the divine name, Allāh, had to be clearly mentioned to emphasize the fact that if Allāh had so willed, they would not have fought. This force could not be produced by saying, ‘‘if We had so willed . . .’’ And it is for the same reason that the divine name, and not the pronoun, has been repeated in the next sentences, ‘‘and if Allāh had so pleased they would not have fought’’, and ‘‘Allāh does what He intends’’.

QUR’ĀN: *But they differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied:* We have already described why Allāh attributed the difference to the people, and not to Himself. He has declared several times that the difference in belief and disbelief appeared among people because of their envy, rebellion and evil desire; and such things cannot be attributed to Allāh.

QUR’ĀN: *And if Allāh had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allāh does what He intends:* We have already explained this. If Allāh had so wished, ie could have disconnected the cause, the difference, from its effect, the fighting. But Allāh does what He intends, and He has decided that the difference will cause the fighting, according to the system of cause and effect which He has decreed in this world.

In short, the verse says that the apostles sent by Allāh are His servants, very near to Him, above mankind in their excellence; they have

been exlated, some above others, in the degrees of their ranks but they all equally share the basic excellence of apostleship. They came to their peoples with clear, arguments and miracles; they clearly pronounced the truth and unmistakably showed the right path. It might have been expected that their followers, after them, would not have abandon the unity, love and mutual regard in the cause of the religion of Allāh. But there was another factor, lurking about, and that was their envy and rebellion, which divided them up into believers and non-believers; and this difference spread and affected all aspects of their lives. If Allāh had so wished, He could have taken away the causative power of this difference, and then it would not have led to fighting. But He did not wish so, and let the system of cause and effect take its course; and He brings out what He wishes.

QUR'ĀN: *O you who believe! Spend . . . and the unbelievers — they are unjust:* The meaning is quite clear. The last sentence implies that not spending in the way of Allāh is unbelief and injustice.

TRADITIONS

al-Bāqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allāh: *These apostles . . .:* ''There is in this (verse) that which may be a proof that the companions of Muḥammad did differ (among themselves) after him, so there were some of them who believed and others who disbelieved.'' (*al-Kāfī*)

Aṣbagh ibn Nubātah said: ''I was standing with the Leader of the faithfuls, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) on the day of the Camel. There came a man and stood before him and said: 'O Leader of the faithfuls! These people (i.e., the enemies) said *takbīr* (*Allāhu Akbar*), and we said it; and they said *tahlīl* (*lā ilāha illa 'llāh*) and we said it; and they prayed and we prayed. Then, on what (ground) are we fighting them?' He ('Alī - a.s.) replied: 'On (the basis of) this verse: *These apostles, We have made some of them to excel others; among them are some to whom Allāh spoke and some of them He exalted by degree* (of rank); *and We gave clear* (evidence) *to 'Īsā, son of Maryam, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allāh had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another — so* we are those after them — *but they*

differed; so there were some of them who believed and others who disbelieved; and if Allāh had so pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allāh does what He intends. So we are those who believed and they are those who disbelieved.' Thereupon, the man said: 'These people are unbelievers, by the Lord of the Ka'bah!' Then he attacked and fought them until he was killed; may Allāh have mercy on him!'' (*at-Tafsīr,* of al-'Ayyāshī)

The author says: This event has been narrated by al-Mufīd in his *al-Amālī,* and by ash-Shaykh in his book of the same name, and by al-Qummī in his *at-Tafsīr.* This tradition shows that 'Alī (a.s.) interpreted ''disbelief'' in this verse in a general sense, which includes hidden, disbelief as well as open disbelief which is termed *al-kufr* (الْكُفْرُ = infidelity) in Islam and with which Islam deals in a special way. It is well-known from traditions and history that 'Alī (a.s.) did not treat his opponents (in the battles of the Camel, Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān) like any group of the unbelievers — they were not dealt with like unbelievers, whether from the people of the book or others, nor like the apostates. The only implication of this special treatment is that he thought them to be unbelievers in their hearts but not openly. And he (a.s.) used to say: ''I fight against them on the interpretation (of the Qur'ān), not on (its) revelation.''

The verse clearly supports this meaning. It says that the clear evidence brought by the apostles did not prevent the fighting of their followers because they differed among themselves; and such a difference cannot be removed by those arguments and evidence because it is not based on reason but on envy and rebellion. The verse thus describes the phenomenon mentioned in the following verses:

And peple were naught but a single nation, then they disagreed; and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would have certainly been decided between them in respect of that concerning which they disagree (10:19).

Mankind was but one people, so Allāh sent the prophets . . . And none differed about it but the very people who were given it after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves; whereupon Allāh guided, by His will, those who believed to the truth about which they differed (2:213).

. . . and they shall continue to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy . . . (11:118 — 119).

All this shows that difference about the book, that is, about the religion, between the followers of the apostles, after the departure of those apostles, cannot be avoided. Allāh says particularly about this *ummah: Or do you think that you would enter the Garden while yet the like of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you?* (2:214). And He informs us of the complaint of His Apostle on the Day of Resurrection: *And the Apostle cried out: ‘‘O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur’ān as a forsaken thing’’* (25:30). In these, and many other verses, this factor has been explicitly or implicitly mentioned.

And it is a fact that difference in the Muslim *ummah* started in the days of the companions. History and *mutawātir* and near *mutawātir* traditions clearly show that, in the troubles and discords which started soon after the Apostle, the companions themselves dealt with each other in this same way. In their own eyes they were treading the path of the discord and difference mentioned in these verses. And none of them claimed that he was above any difference on account of *‘iṣmah* (sinlessness) or good tidings given to him by the Apostle, or *ijtihād,* nor did anyone say that he was not included in these verses. (We do not include *Ahlu ’l-bayt* of the Prophet in the term ‘companion’.) More details of this difference is beyond the scope of this book.

al-Mufīd narrates in his *al-Amālī* from Abū Basīr that he said: ‘‘I heard Abū ‘Abdillāh (a.s.) say: ‘Allāh, Great is His name, was ever Omniscient in His person and there was nothing to be known; and He was ever Omnipotent in His person and there was nothing to be ordained.’ I said: ‘May I be your ransom! Was He then ever Speaking?’ He said: ‘Speech is created. There was Allāh and He was not speaking, then He created speech.’ ’’

Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā said: ‘‘Abū Qurrah, the traditionalist, asked ar-Riḍā (a.s.) and said: ‘Tell me, may I be your ransom! About Allāh’s speaking to Mūsā.’ He (the Imām) said: ‘Allāh knows better in which language He spoke to him.’ Abū Qurrah caught his own tongue and said: ‘I am asking you about this tongue.’ Thereupon Abu ’1-Ḥasan (a.s.) said: ‘Glorified is Allāh from what you say! And may Allāh protect you (from

thinking) that He might resemble His creatures or might speak like they speak; rather, He, Golorified be He, there is nothing like Him, nor there is any speaker or doer like Him.' (Abū Qurrah) said: 'How?' (The Imām) said: 'The speech of Allāh with His creature is not like the speech of a creature with another creature; and He does not speak with a mouth and tongue; rather He says to it: 'Be' and it is. It was by His will He addressed (His) command and prohibition to Mūsā without any meditation in His Self.' '' (*al-Iḥtijāj*)

Alī (a.s.) said in a sermon: ''Speaking, not by meditation, Wishing, not by contemplation.'' (*Nahju 'l-balāghah*)

In the same book, he ('Alī-a.s.) says, *inter alia,* in another sermon: ''He Who spoke to Mūsā (directly) speaking, and showed him of His great signs, without limbs and organs and without implements, sound or uvula.''

The author says: The traditions narrated from the Imāms of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* with this meaning are numerous, and all of them show that the speech of Allāh (to use the terminology of the Qur'ān and *sunnah*) is an attribute of action, and not an attribute of Person.

A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION ABOUT THE SPEECH OF ALLĀH

Philosophers point out that when a speaker conveys his thought to the mind of a hearer, by means of words, it is popularly called speech and talk, and its net result is that the hearer understands and the speaker is understood. The reality of speech is ''what conveys an idea to the other party''; rather particulars — the medium of words, and their being produced by the passage of air through the larynx, mouth, and lips and their entering the ears of the hearer — are inconsequential; they are not essential to the reality of speech. Whatever describes the intended meaning is speech; even the movement of your hand to call someone to your side or to indicate to him to sit down, etc. is your speech, albeit without your uttering a single word.

Taking this as their basis, the philosophers say: the things found in the universe depend on their causes for their existence and for their

characteristics. By their existence they pronounce the existence of their causes; and by their characteristics and faculties they show the characteristics and faculties of their causes. Therefore, every ''effect'' is a speech for its cause, and by this speech that cause talks about its own perfection.

And all existing things taken separately or jointly, and their aggregate, the universe, are, in this way, the speech of God; by this speech, God describes His perfect attributes which are otherwise hidden from us. Allāh is the Creator of the universe, and the universe is His creation. In the same manner, He speaks via the medium of the universe about His names and attributes, and the universe is His speech.

They go even further: They say that deep thinking leads one to the belief that the ultimate ''speech'' is God Himself. We say that the universe leads to the Creator; but leading is a quality of existence and nothing in the universe exists on its own. Every thing exists because God has given it existence. When a thing leads to the Creator, it does so by the existence and qualities given to it by the Creator. In other words, it is the Creator Himself Who leads to Himself through His creation. In the same way, it is He Himself Who leads to His creation. He Himself leads us to Himself; in this sense, He is the speech and the Speaker and the meaning; and at this stage, we may say that His speech is His person or an attribute of His person. Also, He Himself, by creating the universe, leads us to His power and wisdom; the universe is, thus, His speech to lead us to the Creator; and in this sense, speech (i.e., the universe) is an attribute of His action.

The author says: Quite apart from the question of the correctness of this interpretation, the words of the Qur'ān do not support it.

Speech, as mentioned in the Qur'ān and *sunnah*, is something different from the Speaker and the hearer. Allāh says: *Among them are some to whom Allāh spoke* (2:253); *and Allāh spoke to Mūsā* (directly) *speaking* (4:164); *and Allāh said: ''O 'Īsā!''* (3:55); *and We said: ''O Ādam!''* (2:35); *Surely We have revealed to you* (4:163); *informed me the All-knowing, the All-aware* (66:3); there are numerous similar verses. Obviously, the speech or talk mentioned in them cannot mean the Person of Allāh by any stretch of imagination.

DISCUSSION OF SPEECH IN THEOLOGY: This subject was

among the very first points of contention in the Muslim world; and that is why theology was named *'ilmu 'l-kalām* (عِلْمُ الْكَلاَمِ = the knowledge of speech) in Islam. The question which split the Muslim scholars was whether the speech of Allāh was eternal.

The Ash'arites said that it was eternal. But they invented a new meaning for 'speech'. According to them, 'speech' means the thought and meaning which is found in the mind of the speaker, and the spoken word is a mere manifestation of that 'speech'. They named it *al-kalāmu 'n-nafsī* (الْكَلاَمُ النَّفْسِيُّ) that is, the speech found in the person. Armed with this new meaning, they said that the ideas and thoughts of Allāh are nothing more or less than the Knowledge of Allāh. And, as the knowledge of Allāh, they are self-existent, eternal. So far as the spoken words are concerned, they are obviously created, and separate from the person of Allāh.

The Mu'tazilites said that it was created. And they interpreted 'speech' as the words which are spoken and which show the meanings for which they are made. They said that this was the meaning of 'speech' as understood by all; and what the Ash'arites had named ''the speech found in the person'' is not speech; it is knowledge. In other words, when we talk, we do not find in our minds anything other than the mental pictures or the meanings which we express in our words. If that mental picture is called ''the speech found in the person'' then it is knowledge and nothing else. And if they use this name for something else, that something is unknown to us all.

The Ash'arites say that it is possible to use two or more adjectives or names for a single thing, depending on the aspect or aspects which are to be emphasized. Now, if we think about that mental picture in terms of its being the picture of a truth or fact, then it will be called ''knowledge''; and if we look at it as a picture which can be transmitted to others, then it will be called ''speech''.

The author says: All this conflict and polemic is quite beside the point. The Knowledge of Allāh, whether its meaning, is *al-'ilmu 'l-ḥūḍūrī* (العِلْمُ الْحُضُوْرِيُّ), that is, the knowledge which is always present; the knowledge which is not separate from the person of Allāh.

And what these theologians, the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites, are arguing and talking about is *al-'ilmu 'l-ḥuṣūlī'* (العِلْمُ الْحُصُولِيُّ), that is, the knowledge which is acquired. Such knowledge is acquired when ideas

are produced in the mind; these ideas do not exist outside the mind. And we have proved somewhere else that ideas and quiddities are abstract things which do not exist outside the minds of human bings (and of some animals which perform their duties of life with the help of the five senses and some feelings).

Allāh, High and Glorified is He, is too great to be attributed with a ‘‘mind’’ with which He might perceive ideas and quiddities, which are not found outside the imagination of the perceiver. Otherwise, He would become a compound or composed thing and would be liable to transitory phases; and even His speech would have the potentiality to be wrong. Great and Glorified is He from such things.

It is clear from the above explanation that the polemics of the Muslim theologians are totally beside the point. What they were talking about was a kind of acquired knowledge which is beneath Divine dignity. And the ever-present and eternal Knowledge of Allāh is not under dispute as it is not called ‘‘speech’’ even by the Ash‘arites.

Further details, as to how He knows the ideas which we express in words, will be given in a more appropriate place.

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اللهُ لا إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلاَ نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰاتِ
وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا
خَلْفَهُمْ وَلا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلاَّ بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمٰوَاتِ
وَالأَرْضَ وَلاَ يَؤُدُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ـ ٢٥٥ .

ALLĀH *is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtak e Him nor sleep; whatever is the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His Permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything of His Knowledge except what He pleases; His Chair* (Knowledge) *extends over the heavens and the earth; and the preservation of them both tires Him not; and He is the Most High, the Great* (2:255).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *Allāh is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist:* In the chapter of the Opening, some explanation was given of the name, ''Allāh'', and it was mentioned that it ultimately means ''The Being Who concentrates in

Himself all the attributes of perfection''; it makes no difference whether it is derived from *alaha 'r-rajul* (أَلِهَ الرَّجُلُ = the man was bewildered; yearned for) or from *alaha* (أَلَهَ = worshipped). ''He besides Whom there is no god'': It has been explained under verse 2:163. Its literal translation is, ''there is no god except He''. It shows that other deities worshipped besides Allāh, in fact have no existence at all.

''Ever-living'': *''al-ḥayy''* (الحَيُّ) is on a paradigm which denotes perpetuity; the word, therefore, means not only living but Ever-living. Man, in the very beginning, found out that there were two kinds of things around him: first, those things whose condition do not change as long as they exist, like stones and other such materials; second, those which go on changing, like trees, animals and man himself. He also found that after sometimes such things start to deteriorate, and even lose consciousness; still they exist; until at a certain point when their existence come to an end. Thus he realized that there was something else, besides the senses, which keeps one alive and which is the source of all the senses and their perceptions. He called it ''life'', and its absence was named ''death''. It is life which is the source of knowledge (perception) and power.

Allāh has mentioned this life in many places as an accepted fact: *Know that Allāh gives life to the earth after its death* (29:17); *And among His signs is this, that you see the earth still, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells; most surely He who gives it life is the Giver of life to the dead* (41:39); *Neither are the living and the dead alike* (35:22); *We have made of water every thing living* (21:30). These verses describe all three kinds of living things, the vegetable, the animal and the human being.

Likewise, Allāh describes various types of life; . . . *and are pleased with the world's life and are content with it . . .* (10:7); *They shall say: ''Our Lord! twice didst Thou make us subject to death and twice hast Thou given us life . . .* (40:11). The two lives refered to in this verse are the life of *al-barzakh* (البَرْزَخُ = the period after death in this world and before the Dayof Resurrection) and the life on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, there are various types of life, as there are various types of living things.

Although Allāh mentions the life of this world as an accepted fact, in various other verses of the Qur'ān He describes it as an unsound,

imperfect and insignificant thing, as He says: . . . *this world's life is nothing compared with hereafter but* (only a) *means* (13:26); . . . *coveting the* (transitory) *goods of this world's life* . . . (4:94); . . . *desiring the adornments of this world's life* . . . (18:28); *And this world's life is naught but a play and an idle sport* . . . (6:32); . . . *and this world's life is naught but means of deception* (57:20). So these are the attributes used for this world's life. It is a means, and a means is sought to obtain an end and to reach a goal, it is not an end in itself. It is a transitory thing, and transitory things go away soon. It is an adornment, and an adornment is used to attract eyes towards the things adorned: in other words, what catches the eyes is not the real thing, and the real thing does not attract the eyes. It is a play, and a play keeps you oblivious of the really important responsibilities. It is a vain sport, and a vain sport is indulged in for imaginary, not real, reasons. And it is a means of deception, and such a thing deceives man.

A comprehensive verse, which also explains the above-mentioned ones, is the following:

And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, the most surely is the life — did they but know! (29:64).

The life of this world, in comparison to the life hereafter is not a real life, as the above-mentioned verse shows. It is transitory, while the life hereafter is the real life, because that life will not end; death will not reach it. Allāh says: . . . *in security; they shall not taste therein death except the first death* (44:55 — 56); *They shall have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet* (50:35).

Thus, there will be no death in the life hereafter, and there shall be no deficiency in that life nor there shall be any annoyance for them. But the first factor, that is, security is the basic characteristic of that real life.

The life hereafter, therefore, is the real life because there is no death in it; and, as Allāh Himself has declared in many other verses, it is He Who controls it. Obviously, the life hereafer is also dependent and not independent. It has not got this characteristic of eternity by itself; it is a gift given to it by God.

Going a step further, it will be realized that the real life is only that which 'cannot' be overtaken by death. The life hereafter 'will not' be overtaken by death; but it 'can' be overtaken, if God so pleases. Therefore, that also is not ''real'' life. Real life is that in which non-existence at any stage is impossible; which is essential being; in other words, where life is not acquired by the person, but the person is life itself and life is the person himself. Allāh says: *and rely on the Ever-living Who dies not* (25:58). Thus, the only real life is Divine Life, Essential Being.

The above discourse shows that the exclusiveness in the verse: *He is the Living, there is no god but He* (40:65) is real, not relative: In reality, He is the only Living One, because real life, unconquered by death or deterioration, is His alone.

In the verse under discussion, as in a similar verse: *Allāh there is no god but He, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting* . . .(3:2), the word ''Allāh'' is the subject, ''there is no god but He'' is its first predicate, ''the Ever-living'' is the second and ''the Self-subsisting . . .'' the third predicate. Accordingly, the meaning would be ''Allāh is the Ever-living . . .''; and life would be reserved for Allāh only; others would get life only when He bestows it on them.

''al-Qayyūm'' (القَيُّوْمُ = the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist) is on the paradigm of *fay'ūl* (فَيْعُولُ), from the verb *al-qiyām* (القِيَامُ = to stand); as is *al-qayyām* (القَيَّامُ) on the paradigm of *fay'āl* (فَيْعَال), in the same meaning. It is a paradigm which is used to show the maximum degree of a quality. The original meaning of the verb (to stand) has, by association, been extended and now it is used for protecting a thing, accomplishing a task and managing it, bringing up a thing, looking after it and having power over it. Allāh clearly said that He ''stands'' with the affairs of His creation, that is, watches it, looks after it and brings it up and has all power over it. He says: *Is it He then who stands over* (i.e., watches) *every soul as to what it earns?* (13:33). Another verse is more comprehensive: *Allāh bears witness that there is no god but He* (and so do the angels and those possessed of knowledge), *standing with* (maintaining) *justice, there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise* (3:18). He maintains His creation with justice. He does not give and does not withhold but with justice — and existence is nothing except giving

and withholding. He gives to everything what it deserves. Lastly, He declares that this maintaining with justice is according to His two great names, the Mighty, the Wise: by His Might He maintains every thing; and by His Wisdom He, does justice to it.

Allāh is the origin of every thing. Existence as well as all attributes, qualities and the effects of every thing begin from Him. All other ‘‘origins’’ originates from Him. He stands over every thing in the real and comprehensive sense of ‘‘standing’’, as explained above. There is no weakness or flaw in His ‘‘standing’’; and other things cannot stand except by Him. This attribute is reserved for Him in both ways: ‘‘Standing’’. cannot be found except in Allāh, and Allāh is never anything but standing. The former is understood by the syntax of the sentence: Allāh is the ‘‘Standing’’. The latter is understood by the next sentence: ‘‘Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep’’.

This discourse leads us to believe that the name *al-qayyūm* (The Standing) is the basis for all the divine names which refer to His attributes of action in any way, like the Creator, the Sustainer, the Originator, the Resurrector, the Bestower of life, the Giver of death, the Forgiver, the Compassionate, the Affectionate and so on.

QUR’ĀN: *Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep: ‘‘as-Sinah’’* (السِّنَةُ) means drowsiness; *‘‘an-nawm’’*(النَّوْمُ) is sleep, the inert condition in which the muscles are relaxed and the consciousness suppressed by natural factors in the body of an animal or a human being. *‘‘ar-Ru’yā’’* (الرُّؤْيَا = dream) is something else; it is the vision which passes through the mind in sleep.

A criticism has been levelled against this sentence that is contrary to the sequence demanded by rhetoric: when two things are thus mentioned in an affirmative sentence the weaker point is mentioned first and then one progress to the stronger one; for example, we say, ‘‘Zayd can carry a load of fifty kilogram, even a hundred.’’ But in a negative sentence the sequence is reversed; it goes from stronger to weaker point; for example, ‘‘He cannot carry a load of a hundred kilogram, let alone fifty’’; ‘‘he does not spend hundreds of pounds on himself, let alone tens.’’ According to this rule, as the sentence here is negative, it should have been written thus: ‘‘Sleep does not overtake Him nor slumber’’.

REPLY: The sequence does not always follow the affirmativeness or

negativeness of the sentence. Look, for example, as the sentence, ‘‘He is too weak to carry a load of twenty kilogram or even ten.’’ It is an affirmative sentence, and still the stronger point comes first. It would be against the norms of rhetoric, if the weaker point, that is, 10 kilogram were mentioned first. In fact, the only correct procedure is to look at the context and see what it demands. Now, look at this Qur’ānic sentence. Sleep is more contrary to the attribute of ‘‘Standing’’ in comparison to slumber. Therefore, eloquence demanded that, first, slumber be denied, and. then the stronger point, sleep, be negated. The meaning, thus, will be: The weaker factor (slumber) has no effect on His power and standing, nor does even the stronger one (sleep).

QUR’ĀN: *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?:* The perfect and comprehensive ‘‘Standing’’ of Allāh means that He owns, in real ownership, the heavens and the earth and what is in them. That is why His attribute of ‘‘Standing’’ is followed here by a declaration of that ownership. It was for the same reason that the attribute of ‘‘Standing’’ was joined with the declaration of His Oneness: His Oneness would not be complete if He were not ‘‘Standing’’.

There are two sentences here, both of which are followed by other sentences to remove chances of misunderstandings. The sentence, ‘‘whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His’’, is followed by the sentence, ‘‘who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?’’ And the next sentence, ‘‘He knows what is before them and what is behind them’’, is followed by the words, ‘‘and they cannot comprehend anything of His Knowledge except what He pleases.’’

‘‘Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His’’: Allāh owns everything, and has authority over them all. Things and all their attributes, properties and traits exist because of God and by Him. The verse, from the word ‘‘the Self-subsisting’’ upto this sentence, proves that the total authority is Allāh’s alone. There is no work connected with anything, right from its existence upto its ultimate end, that is not done by Him and does not proceed from Him.

On realizing this eternal truth, one might wonder about the system of ‘‘cause-and-effect’’ prevalent in this world. What is the significance of

these causes? How could they have any influence on any effect when nothing has any effect or power except Allāh?

The sentence, ‘‘who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission?’’ answers this speculation. These causes are intermediaries in such affairs. In other words, they are intercessors who cause the bringing of a thing or effect into being, by the permission of Allāh. Intercession means being an intermediary in bringing about a good or averting an evil. There is no doubt that an intercessor has some influence on the affairs of the thing for which he intercedes. Such influence could be contrary to the complete authority and total sovereignty of Allāh, had it not been based on the permission of Allāh Himself. But every cause draws its effectiveness only from the decree of Allāh Himself. There is no cause and no instrument which is independent of the will of Allāh. Every cause is a cause, because Allāh has made it so. Therefore, whatever effect and influence it has on anything is in fact done by Allāh. Ultimately, there is no authority except that of Allāh, and no ‘‘standing’’ except His.

As already explained, intercession means being an intermediary in the world of cause and effect — it may be a creative intercession, that is, being an intermediary cause of creation; or a legislative intercession, that is, interceding in the award of recompense on the Day of Judgement, as is clearly mentioned in the Qur’ān and *sunnah* (as was described in the commentary on verse 2:48). The sentence, ‘‘who is he that can intercede with Him . . .’’ is preceded by a description of His ‘‘Standing’’ and total authority; these two attributes cover His power and authority in both creation and legislation. Therefore, the intercession mentioned in this sentence must cover both creative and legislative intercessions.

The context of this verse, so far as intercession is concerned, is like the following verses: *Surely your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is firmly established on the ‘Arsh* (Throne) *regulating the affair; there is no intercessor except after His permission; this is Allāh, your Lord; therefore worship Him; will you not then ponder?* (10:3); *Allāh is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and He is firmly established on the ‘Arsh* (Throne); *you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessor; will you not then ponder?* (32:4). It was

described in the topic of intercession that it includes creative causation as well as legislative intercession. Every cause intercedes with Allāh for its effect, and becomes a medium for bestowing the grace of existence on it, by adhering to the divine attributes of grace and mercy. The system of ‘‘cause-and-effect’’ is found in intercession as well as in prayer and invocation. Allāh says: *All those who are in the heavens and the earth do beseech Him; every day He is in a* (new) *splendour* (55:29) ; *And He gave you of all that you ask Him* (14:34). This aspect has been described in the commentary on verse 2:186.

QUR'ĀN: *He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases:* The sentence comes after the topic of intercession, and in its context it is like the following verses: *Nay! They are honoured servants; they do not precede Him in speech and* (only) *according to His commandment do they act. He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not intercede except for him whom He approves, and for fear of Him they tremble* (21:26 — 28).

Apparently, the pronouns of the third person plural in the verse under discussion refer to the intercessors, who are implied in the preceding sentence. To say that ‘‘He knows what is before them and what is behind them’’ is to say that He encompasses them completely. He has given them permission to intercede; but it does not mean that they can do anything without His prior permission. Nor may others take undue advantage of that intercession.

The following two verses throw light on the same subject: *And we do not come down but by the command of your Lord; His is whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these, and your Lord is not forgetful* (19:64); *The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secret to any, except to him whom He chooses of an apostle; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him, so that He may know that they have indeed delivered the messages of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them and He takes account of every thing* (72:26 — 28). These two verses show that Allāh encompasses the angels and the prophets, so that they cannot do anything without His permission; they cannot descend unless bidden to do so, and cannot deliver except what He wishes them to deliver. It may be inferred

that ‘‘what is before them’’ refers to what is seen by them; and ‘‘what is behind them’’ to what is not seen by them and is far away from them. In other words, the two phrases refer to the seen and the unseen. In short, the sentence says that Allāh knows very well what is present with them and what is yet to come to them; and then the talk is completed by the words, ‘‘and they cannot comprehend any thing out of His knowledge except what He pleases’’. He knows them and encompasses what they know, but they cannot comprehend His knowledge except what He pleases.

We have proved that the intercessor, in this verse, means both creative causes and legislative interceders. The pronouns used in three places in this verse are those of the third person plural, masculine gender, normally used for rational beings. Someone might think that these pronouns could not be used for creative causes (as these causes are not ‘‘people’’ or rational beings). It is not so. Intercession, interceding, glorifying the Creator and offering thanks to Him are normally the acts of rational beings; and for this reason the Qur’ān mostly uses such pronouns even for inert or lifeless things, when it declares them to perform such deeds. Allāh says:. . . *and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification* (17:44); *Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was vapour, so He said to it and to the earth; Come both willings or unwillingly. They both said. We come willingly* (41:11). In both verses the pronouns of rational beings have been used for ‘‘everything’’ and for the heaven and the earth. There are many similar verses.

The sentence, ‘‘and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases’’, shows total authority and perfect management. Perfect management demands that the subordinate should not know what is to happen next; otherwise, he might try to wriggle out of a forthcoming unpleasant situation, and the plan of the manager might be put in disorder. It is easy to see in the light of the above discussion the import of this sentence: it wants to show that the management of all affairs is in the hands of Allāh only, and it is done by His knowledge and by His control of the intermediary causes which He Himself has created. So far as these intermediary causes are concerned (and especially those with life and intellect), their effectiveness and their knowledge is derived

from His knowledge, will and pleasure — and ultimately is a reflection of divine knowledge and power. And none of them can proceed against the will and decree of Allāh in any way.

The sentence, moreover, shows that knowledge (not ‘‘the thing known’’) is of Allāh only. No creature has any knowledge except what Allāh is pleased to bestow upon him. It is the same as when Allāh has said that power, honour and life belongs to Him only. For example: . . . *and O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allāh's, and that Allāh is severe in requitting* (evil) (2:165); *Do they seek honour from them? Then surely all honour is for Allāh* (4:139); *He is the Living, there is no god but He* (40:65). The following verses also may be brought as evidence that knowledge belongs to Allāh only: *surely He is the Knowing, the Wise* (12:83); *and Allāh knows while yo do not know* (3:66). There are many other verses of the same meaning.

The verb of knowledge in the preceding sentence has been changed to the verb of comprehension here and it has raised the verse to a very high plane of eloquence.

QUR'ĀN: *His Chair* (knowledge) *extends over the heavens and the earth: ‘‘al-Kursi’’* (الكُرْسِيُّ) means chair. Metaphorically it sometimes is used for kingdom; thus the chair of king means the sphere of his authority and the region under his sovereignty.

The preceding sentences show that the whole universe belongs to Allāh and is encompassed by His knowledge. This sentence also says that His ‘‘Chair’’ extends over the whole universe. It is reasonable to believe that the extension of the ‘‘Chair’’ refers to all-encompassing divine authority. The ‘‘Chair’’, thus, would mean the divine position by which the heavens and the earth are maintained, possessed, managed and known. Ultimately, the ‘‘Chair’’ would be a degree of divine knowledge. And extension of the chair would mean maintainance and preservation of everything that is in the heavens and in the earth, with all its characteristics; and that is why the sentence is followed by the words, ‘‘and the preservation of them both tires Him not.’’

QUR'ĀN: ‘‘and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great’’*:‘‘al-Awd’’* (الأَوْدُ) means to tire, to weigh down, to depress. Although, the objective pronoun after the verb ‘‘tires’’

is generally taken to refer to ‘‘Allāh’’ (as is seen in the translation), equally correctly it may be taken to refer to the ‘‘Chair’’ and then it would be translated as ‘‘tires it not’’. The declaration at the end of the verse that ‘the preservation of the heavens and the earth tires Him not’ is befitting to its beginning: ‘‘Slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep’’.

This verse, in short, says that there is no god except Allāh, for Him is Life and to Him belongs the attribute of *al-qayyūmiyyah* (القَيُّوْمِيَّةُ = Standing, Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist), in its unrestricted sense without any weakness or defect. That is why the verse ends on the words, ‘‘and He is Most High, the Great’’. He is Most High: the hands of creatures cannot reach Him and can in no way weaker His authority or enfeeble His being. He is Great: the great number of the creatures does not overwhelm Him, and the magnitude of the heavens and the earths does not tire Him.

This sentence also shows that eminence and greatness in their true sense are for Allāh only. This restriction is real, because eminence and greatness are parts of perfection, and every perfection in its real sense is found in Allāh only. Also, the restriction may have been used to strengthen the claim that the eminence and greatness are reserved for Allāh only — the heavens and the earth are insignificant before His majesty and greatness.

TRADITIONS

al-‘Ayyāshī narrates in his *at-Tafsīr* from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.): ‘‘Abū Dharr said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh! What is the best of that which has been revealed to you?’ He said: ‘The verse of the ‘‘Chair’’. The seven heavens and the seven earths in the ‘‘Chair’’ are but like a ring thrown in a vast open space.’ Then he said: ‘And surely the excellence of *al-‘Arsh* (العَرْشُ = the Throne) over the chair is like that of the open space over the ring.’ ’’

The author says: as-Suyūṭī has quoted the first part of this tradition in *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr* from Ibn Rāhwayh (in his *al-Musnad*) who has narrated it from ‘Awf ibn Mālik from Abū Dharr; and also he has quoted Aḥmad, Ibnu ’ḍ-Ḍarīs and al-Ḥākim (who said that it is correct)

and al-Bayhaqī (in his *Shu'abu'l-'īmān*) who have narrated it from Abū Dharr.

Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarānī have narrated from Abū Amāmah who said: ''I said: 'O Messenger of Allāh! Which (verse) revealed to you is the greatest?' He said: 'Allāh is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; the verse of the Chair.' '' (*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*)

The author says: as-Suyūṭī has also narrated the same thing through al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (in his *Tārīkh*) from Anas from the Prophet.

In the same book he quotes ad-Dārimī who has narrated from Ayfa' ibn 'Abdullāh al-Kalā'ī that he said: ''A man said: 'O Messenger of Allāh! Which verse in the Book of Allāh is the greatest?' He said: 'The verse of the Chair; *Allāh is He besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist . . .' ''*

The author says: This verse was named ''the verse of the Chair'' in the early period of Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet; and was thus described by the Prophet himself as the traditions quoted from him and the Imāms of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* and the companions prove. That this verse was given a special name shows how much importance was attached to it. It could only be because of the highest nobility of its meaning and the elegance and grace of its style. It establishes the pristine belief of the Oneness of God (*Allāh is He besides Whom there is no god*), and then goes on to the attribute of ''standing'' which is the foundation of all His names which describe His attributes of action. Then it gives details of those attributes in all small and big things and affairs of the universe, showing that whatever emanates from His authority is a part of that authority. It is because of these fine points that the traditions have called it ''the greatest verse of the Qur'ān''. It deals in detail with various aspects of monotheism and divine authority. Of course, there are some other verses which deal with this subject, for example; *Allāh is He besides Whom there is no god; His are the very best names* (20:8). But it lacks the details which have been given in this verse of the Chair. It is for this reason that some traditions have said that the verse of the Chair is the chief of all the verses of the Qur'ān. See for the proof the tradition narrated in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from Abū Hurayrah from the Prophet. Some, other traditions say: Every thing has a summit, and the summit of the Qur'ān is

the verse of the Chair. It has been narrated in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī from 'Abdullāh ibn Sinān from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.).

aṭ-Ṭūsī has narrated in his *al-Amālī,* through his chains from Abū Amāmah al-Bāhilī that he heard 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) say: ''I do not think that a man who enters into Islam on attaining wisdom, or was born in Islam (i.e., in a Muslim family) should pass a night's darkness . . .'' (At this juncture Abū Amāmah interrupted by asking, ''and what is the meaning of a night's darkness?'' 'Alī [a.s.] said: ''the whole night'') ''until he recites this verse: *Allāh is He besides Whom there is no god . . . '';* and he recited the complete verse upto the end: *and the preservation of them both tires Him not; and He is the Most High, the Great.* Then he said: ''If you but knew what it is (or, as another version says, ''what is in it'') you would not leave it on any condition. Surely, the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said, 'I have been given the verse of the Chair from the treasure (that is) below *al-'Arsh* (the Throne); and no prophet before me was given it:' '' Then 'Alī (a.s.) continued: ''I have not spent a single night, since I heard it from the Messenger of Allāh, without reciting it . . .''

The author says: This has been narrated in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* quoting 'Ubayd, Ibn Abī Shaybah, ad-Dārimī, Muḥammad ibn Naṣr, Ibnu 'ḍ-Ḍarīs and ad-Daylamī, all from 'Alī (a.s.). There is a multitude of traditions, from both Sunnī and Shī'ite sources, about the excellence of this verse. The tradition of the Prophet quoted in this tradition (''I have been given the verse of the Chair from below the Throne'') has been narrated in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* on the authority of al-Bukhārī (in his *at-Tārīkh*) and Ibnu 'ḍ-Ḍarīs from the Prophet. It may be inferred from it that the Chair is below *al-'Arsh* and is encompassed by it. We shall describe it later.

Zurārah said: ''I asked Abū 'Abdillāh (a.s.) about the words of Allāh: *His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth* — whether the heavens and the earth encompass the Chair or the Chair extends over the heavens and the earth? He said: 'Verily, every thing is in the Chair.' '' (*al-Kāfī*)

The author says: In many traditions the same point has been emphasized in reply to similar questions. This question looks strange, because nobody has ever recited the verse in a way which could justify such confusion. Apparently, the questions were based not on the recital

of the Qur'ān but on the common understanding that the Chair was a particular body kept over the heavens or over the seventh heaven (i.e. above the material world), and from there the affairs of the material world were managed. That being the picture of the Chair in their minds, it was reasonable to suppose that the heavens and the earth encompassed the Chair because it was placed over the heavens as a wooden or iron chair is placed over a floor. And with this background it would seem more appropriate to say that the heavens and the earth encompassed the Chair. And that gave rise to the question as to why Allāh, instead, said: ''His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth?'' A question of the same type was asked about the '*Arsh* and the reply was given that the extension (or encompassing) was not as a material thing encompasses another material thing.

Ḥafṣ ibn al-Ghiyāth said: ''I asked Abū 'Abdillāh (a.s.) about the words of Allāh: *His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth.* He said: 'His knowledge.' '' (*Ma'āni'l-akhbār*)

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imām about this verse which says: ''The heavens and the earth and whatever is between them is in the Chair, and the Throne is that knowledge which no one can measure.''

The author says: These two traditions show that the Chair is one of the levels of the knowledge of Allāh. Many other traditions supports this interpretation.

As will be explained later, there exists a level of knowledge which is not limited or measured. In other words, there is a world, on a higher plane than ours, whose constituents are not bound by material dimensions. They exist and at the same time are known to Allāh. And that knowledge also is unlimited. God willing, we shall describe it in detail when commenting on the verse 10:61: . . . *and there does not lie concealed from your Lord the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven, nor any thing than that nor greater, but it is in a clear book.* This boundless knowledge has been refered to in the tradition of the Imām in these words, ''and the *'Arsh* is that knowledge which no one can measure.'' The import of the tradition is not to show the great number of the known things, because number is not unlimited and anything which is created is finite. What the tradition wants to say is that the limitations and restrictions of this material world are not

found in that world. Existence, on that level, is perfect and the conditions, dimensions and distinctions of this material world are not found there. It is as Allāh says: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure* (15:21).

When those existing things are known by unlimited knowledge, that is, when they exist without any limitation attached to them, that knowledge is called *al-'Arsh* (The Throne); and when they exist in the world of limitations and known with those limitations, that knowledge is called *al-Kursī* (The Chair).

At this stage we may probably say that the words, ''He knows what is before them and what is behind them'' allude to this plane of knowledge. What is before them (i.e. the future) and what is behind them (i.e. the past) is not what is with them (i.e. the present). It refers to a plane where past, present, and future loose their limitations of time, and are all equally present.

Ḥannān said: ''I asked Abū 'Abdillāh (a.s.) about the Throne and the Chair. He replied: 'Verily, the Throne has many diverse attributes. Allāh uses in the Qur'ān various adjectives to describe its various aspects. He says: *the Lord of the great Throne* (9:129). It means; Lord of the great kingdom or authority. And He says: *The Beneficent* (God) *on the Throne is firm* (20:5). It means that He is firm in His kingdom. And it is the knowledge of the ''how'' of the things. Also, the Throne, although together with it, is distinct from the Chair; because they are two of the greatest doors of the unseen, and they both are unseen. And they are together in the unseen, because the Chair is the manifest door of the unseen, from which appears creation and from which all the things come. And the Throne is the concealed door of the unseen in which is found the knowledge of the states, conditions and existence; of measure and limit; of will and intention; as well as the knowledge of words, actions and omissions, and the knowledge of the beginning and the return. Thus, the two are two gates of knowledge joined together, because the dominion of the Throne is other than the dominion of the Chair, and its (the Throne's) knowledge is more hidden than the knowledge of the Chair. That is why Allāh said, ''the Lord of the great Throne'' ; that is, its attribute is greater than that of the Chair, and both are joined in it.' '' (Ḥannān says) ''I said: 'May I be your ransom, then why did it become associated with the

Chair in excellence?' He (the Imām) said: It was associated with it because the knowledge of the state and condition is found in it. And in it are found the manifest doors of *al-badā'* (البدآء = the decree hidden from other); as well as its reality and the dimensions of its joining and separating. Therefore, they are two neighbours, one of which contains the other in itself. And by similitudes are turned those who know, and so that they may offer proof for the truth of their claims. Because He chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy, and He is the Mighty, the Powerful.' '' (*at-Tawḥīd*)

The author says: The words of the tradition, ''the Chair is the manifest door of the unseen'', may be understood in the light of the short explanation given earlier. The level of the knowledge of measured things is nearer to our material world than infinite knowledge which has no limits. Further explanation will be given under verse 7:54: *Surely your Lord is Allāh Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods of time, and He is firm on the Throne.*

''And by similitudes are turned those who know'': It is an indication that the words, throne, chair and similar other expressions, are similitudes which have been given to people for their understanding, and only those who have knowledge understand this.

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said, *inter alia,* in a tradition: ''Every thing which Allāh has created is in the receptacle of the Chair, except His Throne, because that is too great for the Chair to encompass.'' (*al-Iḥtijāj*)

The author says: Its meaning may be understood from the earlier discourse. And it is in conformity with other traditions. Contrary to it there is a tradition which says that the Throne is that knowledge which Allāh gave to His prophets and apostles and the Chair is that knowledge which no one was made aware of. It has been narrated by aṣ-Ṣadūq through Mufaḍḍal from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.). But in view of all other traditions, it can only be surmized that the narrator was confused and changed the names, Throne and Chair, from their proper places. If this is not accepted then the tradition will have to be discarded like the one that is attributed to Zaynab al-'Aṭṭārah.

al-'Ayyāshī narrates in his *at-Tafsīr* from 'Alī (a.s.) that he said: ''Verily the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them is created in the hollow of the Chair; and it has four angels who bear it by the order of

Allāh.''

The author says: aṣ-Ṣadūq has narrated it from ‘Alī (a.s.) through Aṣbagh ibn Nubātah. It is the only tradition narrated from *Ahlu ’l-bayt* which says that there are angels who bear the Chair. But other traditions mention such bearers only for the Throne; and it is in conformity with the Book of Allāh, as He says: *Those who bear the Throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord . . .* (40:7); *and above them eight shall bear on that day the Throne of your Lord* (69:17). It may be said that the Chair is somewhat joined with the Throne, as a manifest side of a thing is joined with its hidden side; and in this way the bearers of one may be called the bearers of the other.

al-‘Ayyāshī narrates in his *at-Tafsīr* from Mu‘āwiyah ibn ‘Ammār that he asked aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) about (the verse), *Who is it that can intercede with Him but by His permission?* He said: ‘‘We are those intercessors.’’

The author says: It has also been narrated by al-Barqī in *al-Maḥāsin.* You know that the intercession in this verse is common to creative and the legislative intercedings, and therefore includes the intercession of the Prophet and the Imāms. This tradition, thus, gives an example of the intercessors.

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لاَ إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ
وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لاَ انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ
ـ ٢٥٦ . اللهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُمْ مِنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ـ ٢٥٧ .

There is no compulsion in the religion; truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; therefore, whoever disbelieves the rebels (false deities) *and believes in Allāh, he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle, for which there is no break off; and Allāh is Hearing, Knowing* (256). *Allāh is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and* (as to) *those who disbelieve their guardians are the rebels, they take them out of the light into the darkness. They are the inmates of the Fire*, *in it they shall abide* (257).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *There is no compulsion in the religion; truly the right*

way has become clearly distinct from error: ''al-Ikrāh'' (الاكْرَاهُ) means to compel someone to a work without his willingness. *''ar-Rushd''* (الرُّشْدُ) is to get at the reality of an affair; to reach the right path. *''al-Ghayy''* (الغيُّ) is its opposite. These two words are more general than ''*al-hudā''* (الهُدَي) (to find the path which leads to the destination) and *''aḍ-ḍalāl''* (الضَّلاَلُ) (not to find such path) respectively. Obviously, when the word *ar-rushd* is used for reaching the right path it is done in the way of applying a general word for a particular example: a walker reaches reality when he travels on the right path. Thus the words *ar-rushd* and *al-hudā* are made for two different meanings, but one is used for the other because of a special associations. Allāh says: . . . *then if you find in them maturity of intellect: ''rushdan''* (رُشْداً) (4:6); *And certainly We gave to Ibrāhīm his rectitude: ''rushdahu''* (رُشْدَهُ) *before* (21:51).

The same applies to *al-ghayy* and *aḍ-ḍalāl.* That is why we have mentioned before that *aḍ-ḍalāl* is to deviate from. the right path but with knowing and remembering the goal and destination; while *al-ghayy* is to deviate from the right path without even remembering the goal and destination — without knowing what one wants and where one wants to go.

''There is no compulsion in the religion'' negates and disapproves compulsion and coercion in religion. Religion is a set of truths which are believed in, and some of them are then acted upon. In short, religion is belief and faith, it is a matter of conscience, and such a thing cannot be created by coercion and compulsion. One may force someone to do a certain physical action against his will but he cannot be forced to believe against his will. Belief follows reason and understanding; and nothing but reason and understanding can create it.

''There is no compulsion in religion'' may be treated as a bit of information or a piece of legislation. If it is information of a creative decree, it will give rise to a legislative order that compulsion should not be used in matters of belief and faith. And if it is an order in the form of information then the meaning is clear. Apparently, this alternative is more correct, because the next sentence (''truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error'') gives the reason for this legislation. And this prohibition of compulsion for religion is based on a factor of creation: the

fact that compulsion can influence physical action but not matters connected with the heart and conscience.

‘‘Truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error’’: As mentioned above, it gives the reason for the prohibition of compulsion. A wise person resorts to compulsion only when the truth of the order cannot be explained, either because the person so coerced has no capacity to understand it or for some other reasons. But there is no need for compulsion in an important matter whose advantages and disadvantages are clearly defined and the reward and punishment of accepting and rejecting well-explained. A man, in such a clear matter, should be free to choose his course of action himself — whether he takes it or rejects it, whether he wants the rewards of obedience or is prepared to take the punishment. The realities of religion have been explained, and its path well-laid; the divine revelation and prophetic explanation have illuminated this highway to the utmost degree. It has now been made clear that the religion is truth, that the only right thing is to accept it and follow it; and that if one deviates from this road he will fall in perdition. Why should anyone, after all these clarifications, compel others to follow the religon?

It is one of the verses that show that Islam is not based on the sword and killing, and that it does not allow Muslims to compel or coerce others to accept Islam. It is contrary to the view held by many Muslims and non-Muslims alike that Islam is the religion of the sword. They bring as their evidence the legislation of *jihād* which is one of the pillars of Islam.

We have already clarified, while writing the commentary on the verses of fighting, that the fighting ordained by Islam is not for the purpose of material advancement nor for spreading the religion by force. It was ordained only for reviving the truth and defending the most precious treasure of nature — the faith of monotheism. Where monotheism is accepted by the people — even if they remain Jew or Christian — Islam does not fight with them. Therefore, the objection arises from clouded thinking.

The verse: ‘‘There is no compulsion in the religion’’, is not abrogated by the verse of the sword, although some writers think so. The order is followed by its reason: ‘‘truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error’’. Such an order cannot be cancelled unless and until its reason is also abrogated. So long as the reason is valid the rule must

remain valid. There is no need to emphasize that the verse of the sword cannot negate the clear distinction of the right way from error. For example, the verses: . . . *and kill them wherever you find them. . .* (4:89) and: *And fight in the way of Allāh . . .* (2:190), have no effect whatsoever on the clear distinction of truth from falsehood; and therefore they cannot abrogate an order based on that distinction.

In other words, this order is based on the fact that the right way is made clearly distinct from error. And this distinction is as valid after the revelation of the verses of fighting as it was before that. And as the cause is not changed, the effect, that is, the said order, cannot be changed or cancelled.

QUR'ĀN: *Therefore, whoever disbelieves in the rebels* (false deities) *and believes in Allāh, he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle, for which there is no break off: ''aṭ-Ṭāghūt''* (الطَّاغُوْتُ) means rebellion and transgression. This paradigm conveys an intensification of the meaning of the root like *al-malakūt* (المَلَكُوتُ = great kingdom) and *al -jabarūt* (الجَبَرُوْتُ = great power). *aṭ-Ṭāghūt* is used for the agents and causes of rebellion and transgression like false deities and idols, satans, jinn and wrong leaders among the human beings; and, in short, everyone who is followed without the permission of Allāh. This word is common for masculine and feminine genders, as well as for singular, dual and plural numbers.

In this sentence, disbelief in the rebels has been mentioned before belief in Allāh. This sequence keeps in view the next sentence (*he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle*). When one wants to lay one's hold on a thing, one has to discard all other things before that. In other words, one has first to leave unwanted things, then comes the stage of holding fast to the desired thing. Therefore, the verse mentioned first the rejection (of the rebels) and then the belief (in Allāh). *''al-Istimsāk''* (الاِسْتِمْسَاكُ) means to hold fast; *''al-'urwah''* (العُرْوَةُ) denotes that part of thing which is made to hold it by, like the handle of a bucket, or of a pot. Also, this word is used for evergreen plants and trees. Its root meaning is attachment; it is said *'arāhu* (عَرَاهُ) and *i'tarāhu* (اِعْتَرِيهُ), both of which mean ''was attached to him''.

The sentence, ''he indeed has laid hold on the strongest handle'', is based on allegory. It conveys the idea that belief in Allāh has the same

relation with eternal bliss that a pot's handle has with that pot and its contents. You cannot be sure of your hold unless you keep the handle in your grip; likewise, one cannot be hopeful about eternal and real bliss unless one believes in Allāh rejecting all false deities.

QUR'ĀN: *For which there is no break off; and Allāh is Hearing, Knowing: ''al-Infiṣām''* (الانْفِصَامُ) is to be cut off, to be broken. The phrase, ''for which there is no break off'' describes the condition or state of the handle, and emphasize the phrase, ''the strongest handle''. The next sentence, ''and Allāh is Hearing, Knowing'', points to the fact that belief and disbelief are matters connected with the heart and the tongue.

QUR'ĀN: *Allāh is the Guardian of those who believe . . . in it they shall abide:* Some explanation has been given, in a previous verse, of ''bringing out of the darkness into the light''. It has been described there that this bringing out and other such phrases express real things, and that they are not used in any allegorical sense. There are two other interpretations given by other commentators of the Qur'ān, which we shall quote here before commenting upon them :

First Interpretation: This bringing out of the darkness into the light and other such phrases are allegorical expressions. They are used for man's actions and physical stillness and movements, and for the good or evil results of such actions. Accrodingly, ''light'' is used for correct belief which removes the darkness of ignorance, the confusion of doubt and the perplexity of the heart. Also it is a metaphor for good deeds because its connection with the right path is clear and its effect on bliss self evident. And the ''light'' has all these attributes and qualties. On the other hand, ''darkness'' is metaphorically used for wrong belief, confusion and doubt as well as for evil deeds. According to this interpretation, the bringing out from darkness into the light (attributed to Allāh) and taking out of light into the darkness (attributed to the rebels and false deities) refer to only true and wrong beliefs and good and evil deeds respectively — there is nothing other than those beliefs and deeds. Allāh or the false deities do not do any action (like bringing out) in this respect, nor is there any effect of such action (like light and darkness).

Second Interpretation: Surely Allāh does the actions like bringing the people out of the darkness into the light, giving life, bestowing

abundance and mercy and similar things. And surely there appear effects of such actions, like light and darkness; the soul and mercy; and the coming down of the angels. But our intellect cannot comprehend it and our senses cannot perceive it. Even then, we believe, as we have been told by Allāh — and Allāh speaks the truth — that these things do exist and that they are the actions of Allāh, although we do not understand them.

This interpretation, like the first one, treats words like light, darkness, taking out, etc. as metaphors. The only difference between the two is that the first one says that the light and the darkness are our correct and wrong deeds and beliefs; and this one says that the light and the darkness are things other than our beliefs and deeds, but we have no way of knowing them or comprehending and understanding them.

Both the interpretations are far from the truth. One has failed to reach the target, the other has overshot it. The fact is that these things, which Allāh has said He creates and does when we obey Him or disobey Him, are real things; there is no allegory in such expressions, but these divine actions are related to our beliefs and deeds — are inseparable from them. And we have already explained this. Of course, it is admitted that the sentences, ''He brings them out of the darkness into the light'', and ''(they) take them out of the light into the darkness'', are metaphors and mean ''He guides them'' and ''they misguide them'' respectively.

In other words, there are two separate matters to decide:

1) Whether the light, the darkness and other such expressions refer to some real things in this life or are merely metaphors?

2) If they refer to some real things then, is the use, for example, of the word ''light'' for guidance real or metaphorical? According to what we have already explained, such expressions refer to real things in this life. And using the ''light'', for example, for guidance is metaphorical.

And in any case, the two sentences mentioned above, are metaphors to denote guidance and misguidance. If we were to interpret them in their literal sense, it would mean that the believer and the disbeliever both have light and darkness together. ''Allāh brings the believers out of the darkness into the light'', if literally interpreted, would mean that the believer was first in the darkness! Conversely, the second sentence would mean that the disbeliever was first in the light! How can this meaning be

correct about the overwhelming majorities of believers and disbelievers who are born in believing or disbelieving families and remain in light or in darkness (as the case may be) from their birth? Such literal interpretation would mean that a child remained in light and darkness at one and the same time; and when, on attaining majority, he accepts the true faith by his own choice, he is removed out of the darkness into the light, and if he disbelieved, he was taken out of the light into the darkness. The absurdity of such an interpretation is quite obvious.

(Of course, it may be said that man in his creation, has the light of natural faith. But it is a general light, which needs details and particularization. In this way, he has the natural light; but, at the same time, is in darkness, so far as detailed knowledge and good deeds are concerned. And, looking from these different angles, it is possible for the light and the darkness to be present in one place at one time. When the believer acquires correct faith, he goes out from that darkness into the light of knowledge and good deed. And the disbeliever, by his disbelief goes out from the natural light into the darkness of disbelief and evil deeds.)

Allāh in both sentences has used ''the light'' (in the singular) and ''the darkness'' (in the plural). It is to indicate that truth is one — there is no difference in it; and that falsehood is multifaced, diverse and variable — there is no unity in it. Allāh says in another place: *And* (know) *that this is My path, the straight one, therefore follow it; and follow not* (other) *ways, for they will scatter you away from His path* (6:153).

TRADITIONS

Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī, Ibnu 'l-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, an-Naḥḥās (in his *an-Nāsikh wa 'l-mansūkh*), Ibn Mandih (in his *al-Gharā'ib*), Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Bayhaqī (in his *as-Sunan*), aḍ-Ḍiyā' (in his *al-Mukhtārah*) have narrated from Ibn 'Abbās that he said: ''(It was customary for) a woman of the Anṣār that if her child died in infancy, she would make a vow that if her child lived she would turn him into a Jew. Thus, when the tribe of Nadīr was banished (from Medina), there were many children of the Anṣār among them. They said that they would not

leave their sons (to migrate). Then Allāh sent down the verse: *There is no compulsion in the religion.''* (*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*)

The author says: The same thing has been narrated, by other chains, from Sa'īd ibn Jubayr and ash-Sha'bī.

'Abd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr and Ibnu 'l-Mundhir have narrated from Mujāhid that he said: ''(The tribe of) Naḍīr had suckled some people from the tribe of Aws. When the Prophet ordered their banishment, their foster sons from the Aws said: 'We shall go with them and enter into their religion.' But their families prevented them and compelled them to (accept) Islam. Then came down the verse about them: *There is no compulsion in the religion.* (*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*)

The author says: This thing too has been narrated from other sources. It is not in conflict with the preceding tradition (about the vow of the women of the Anṣār), as both may be correct.

Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Jarīr have narrated from Ibn 'Abbās that he said about the words of Allāh: *There is no compulsion in the religion:* ''It was revealed about a man from the Anṣār (from the clan of Banu Sālim ibn 'Awf), named al-Ḥuṣayn, who had two Christian sons, and he himself was a Muslim. So he said to the Prophet: 'Should I not compel them, because they have refused, but (remain) the Christianity.' Thereupon, Allāh sent down this (verse) about hint.'' (*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*)

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''The light is the progeny of Muḥammad and the darkness are their enemies.'' (*al-Kāfī*)

The author says: This tradition gives examples of the light and the darkness, or explains its inner meaning or interpretation.

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أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَيْهُ اللهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ
رَبِّي الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللهَ يَأْتِي
بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللهُ لاَ يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ـ ٢٥٨ . أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا
قَالَ أَنَّىٰ يُحْيِي هَٰذِهِ اللهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ
قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْماً أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانْظُرْ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ
يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانْظُرْ إِلَىٰ حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ
نُنْشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْماً فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
ـ ٢٥٩ . وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ
قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِنْ لِيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ
اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِنْهُنَّ جُزْءاً ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْياً وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللهَ عَزِيزٌ
حَكِيمٌ ـ ٢٦٠ .

Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord, because Allāh had given him the kingdom? When Ibrāhīm said: ''My Lord is He Who gives life and cause to die'', he said: ''I give life and cause death.'' Ibrāhīm said. ''So surely Allāh brings the sun from the east, then bring it (you) *from the west.'' Thus he who disbelieved was confounded; and Allāh does not guide aright the unjust people* (258). *Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs; he said: ''How will Allāh give it life after its death?'' So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life. He said: ''How long have you tarried?'' He said: ''I have tarried a day, or a part of a day.'' Said He: ''Nay! You have tarried a hundred years; then look at your food and drink — years have not passed over it; and look at your donkey; and that We may make you a sign to men; and look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh.'' So when it became clear to him, he said: ''I know that Allāh has power over all things''* (259). *And* (remember) *when Ibrāhīm said: ''My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead.'' He said: ''What! and do you not believe?'' He said: ''Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease.'' He said: ''Then take four of the birds, then cut them* (into pieces), *then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allāh is Mighty, Wise''* (260).

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COMMENTARY

The three verses describe the Oneness of the Creator and His Omnipotence. They have, therefore, some connection with the preceding verses; and possibly these were revealed together with them.

QUR'ĀN: *Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord: ''al-Muḥājjah''* (المُحَاجَّةُ) is to bring a proof against the opposite party's, to prove one's own claim or to refute the other party's argument.

The basic meaning of *al-ḥujjah* (الحُجَّةُ) is intention; now it is generally used for ‘‘proof’’ by which one intends to prove one’s claim. The phrase ‘‘about his Lord’’ is connected with the verb ‘‘disputed’’. The pronoun in ‘‘His Lord’’ refers to Ibrāhīm, as may be inferred from the next sentence, ‘‘Ibrāhīm said: ‘My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die.’ ’’ The man who disputed with Ibrāhīm was the king of his time; and according to history and traditions, he was the Babylonian king, Namrūd (Nimrod).

We may understand the nature of this argument and the subject of the dispute, if we look at the context of the verse and reflect upon the behaviour of mankind in the past as well as in the present.

Man, by his nature, has always remained submissive to the powers about him which effect, in one way or the other, his life. No student of anthropology, who has studied the behaviour of the ancients, or has looked at the present generations of various nations, can have any doubt about it. We have described it in preceding discourses; and also it has been pointed out that man, by his nature, accepts that there is a Crator for the universe, Who has brought it into existence, and Who manages it. Every man, by the dictate of nature, believes this — be he a monotheist (a follower of the prophets), a polytheist (like an idol-worshipper) or an atheist (like a materialist). Nature’s demand cannot be negated so long as man is man (although the effect of it may at times become weaker or dormant).

Primitive man, in his simplicity, thought of every thing in the light of his own experience. He saw that he performs different acts by means of his different organs and limbs; and likewise, in society’s structure, various people discharge various duties and functions. And the natural phenomena in the world happen because of their respective natural causes which are closely related to them. Yet, his nature led him to believe in a Crator who had all the affairs of the universe in His hand. Not surprisingly, he thought that every phenomenon of the world had a special deity of its own — and all those deities were under the authority of a Supreme God. Sometimes he named them deities for various things; for example, the deity of the earth, the deity of the rivers, the deity of fire, the deity of wind, etc. At other times, he attributed these functions to the stars, and especially to the planets, the sun and the moon, ascribing to each various faculties believing that each of them affected this world of ours in its own way. This belief was held by the Sabaeans. The next stage was to make images and statues for those lesser deities. Then he started to worship those idols

so that the particular image might intercede on behalf of the worshipper with its particular deity, which in its turn was expected to intercede with the Supreme God — thus ensuring bliss and success for the worshipper in this life and after death.

That also explains why the idols were made in different shapes in different tribes. Views and opinions as regards the attributes of various species and the conceptions of their related deities could not be the same in two nations; and even in one nation they changed with the times. Sometimes other considerations and inclinations crept into the system. Gradually, the idols usurped the place of the said deities, and even the Supreme God was relegated to obscurity. Worshippers intended to give their devotion more and more to what was near them, which they could see and touch, and thus they tended to forget what was beyond their five senses. In this way, idols took the place of the Creator. All this happened because initially they thought that those lesser deities had some influence and control over the affairs of their lives — that the will of those deities dominated their own will and that those deities' management prevailed over their own plans and management.

When some powerful personality appeared on the scene and took the reins of the kingdom in his hands, he often exploited this trend of thought; he had their affairs and their lives in his hands, and it was easy for him to claim for himself the status of divinity, declaring himself to be a god. This is what was done by Pharaoh, Namrūd and many others. It is interesting to note that such people included themselves in the list of deities, while, like their subjects, they continued to worship the idols of their nations. But invariably they always ended up by usurping the dominant position for themselves. In this design of theirs the same process of thought helped them which had raised the idols' status in their people's eyes: the king's influence, authority and hold over his people were more manifest than those of the other deities. Pharaoh declared before his people: *''I am your most high Lord''* (79:24). And he made this claim of supremacy while continuing to worship the other deities. Read for proof the words of Allāh giving the import of the talk of the courtiers of Pharaoh with him showing the danger from Mūsā (a.s.): *''. . . and to forsake you and your gods?''* (7:127). The same was the claim of Namrūd as may be inferred from his assertion: ''I give life and cause death.''

The above discourse may easily explain this dispute between Ibrāhīm (a.s.) and Namrūd. Namrūd believed that there was a Supreme God. Otherwise, he would not have been confounded by the argument of Ibrāhīm (a.s.), ‘‘So surely Allāh brings the sun from the east, then bring it (you) from the west.’’ If he had not believed in a Supreme God, he could have said that it was he (i.e., Namrūd) or some other deity, who brought the sun from the east, and not Ibrāhīm’s Allāh. Apart from the Supreme God, he and his people believed in some other deities too. The lifestory of Ibrāhīm provides ample proof that they worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars, as well as idols. Also read the talk of Ibrāhīm with his uncle on the subject of idols, and see how he shattered their idols (except the big one). All of it shows that Namrūd believed in the divinity of Allāh, as well as in other deities, but at the same time claimed to be a god — indeed the highest god — himself. That was why he tried to prove his own divinity in this dispute with Ibrāhīm, and did not even mention the other, lesser, deities.

Now we should look at the dispute. It was Ibrāhīm’s claim that his Lord is Allāh, and no one else. Namrūd said: ‘‘No! I am your Lord and the Lord of everyone else.’’ Ibrāhīm argued: ‘‘My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die.’’ Namrūd said: ‘‘I give life and cause death.’’ He wanted to show that he held the power which Ibrāhīm attributed to his Lord; therefore, Ibrāhīm should submit to him, and worship him, neither Allāh nor other lesser deities deserved to be worshipped. Note that he did not add ‘‘and’’ in his reply; he did not say, ‘‘and I give life . . .’’ Why? Because the conjunctive ‘‘and’’ would have meant that he shared this power with Allāh; and he did not want to admit any such ‘‘partnership’’ he wanted to be worshipped as the most supreme Lord of the universe. And it was for this very reason that he did not say either, ‘‘and the gods give life . . .’’

He could not honestly refute the argument of Ibrāhīm; so he resorted to sophism, fallacy and deception. When Ibrāhīm mentioned life and death, he meant life and death as we find them in living things. His argument was that these living things could only be created by One who was the source of life. Lifeless nature cannot bestow life on others when it has no life itself. Nor can other living things give life to others, because their life is their existence and their death their extinction — and a thing cannot create or destroy its own self.

If Namrūd had interpreted Ibrāhīm's argument honestly, he could not have refuted it at all. But he resorted to deception, interpreting life and death with an allegorical meaning. ''To give life'' really means, for example, to create a living foetus; but it may be used equally correctly (but in metaphorical way) if you rescue someone from an extremely dangerous situation. Likewise, ''to cause to die'' really means the act of God by which a soul departs from a body; but metaphorically it may be used for murder, etc. Taking advantage of this metaphorical usage, Namrūd ordered two prisoners to be brought before him; one he ordered to be killed and the other was set free. It was at this stage that he uttered the words, ''I give life and cause death''. The courtiers were taken in by this ruse and accepted the ''truth'' of the argument. Ibrāhīm was not in a position to unmask the fallacy of this reply; he saw how Namrūd has duped the audience with his deception and how blindly they agreed to his sophism. Nobody would have agreed with Ibrāhīm even if he had tried to expose that fallacy. Therefore, he switched to another clearer argument which his obstinate opponent could not twist in any way, and said: ''So surely Allāh brings the sun from the east; then bring it (you) from the west.''

Those people (or some of them) believed the sun to be a deity. (Look at the story of Ibrāhīm, concerning the stars, the moon and the sun in the Qur'ān 6:77 — 78) But they also believed that these sources of light and their various phases, rising, setting, etc., were ultimately in the hands of Allāh, who, according to them, was Lord of Lords, God of gods. When a doer does an act by his own free will, he may just as easily reverse that action if he so changes his intention; the direction of his action follows his will. Therefore, when Ibrāhīm put this argument before Namrūd, he was confounded. He could not say: ''The rising of the sun from the east has been, since the very beginning, a matter of chance; it needs no cause'', because commonsense demands a cause for an effect. Nor could he say: ''This system is not caused or controlled by Allāh'', because he himself professed to believe in the Lord of Lords who controlled the sun, etc. And he could not say: ''It is I who bring it from the east''; because Ibrāhīm had already closed this line of argument by saying, ''then bring it (you) from the west''. He was thus ignominiously humiliated and disgraced. ''And Allāh does not guide aright the unjust people.''

QUR'ĀN: *Because Allāh had given him the kingdom?* The import of this

sentence is like one's saying: ''He mistreated me because I did good to him.'' The speaker wants to say: I did good to him; it was to be expected that he also would do good to me; instead, he misbehaved towards me. An Arabic proverb points to this very trait of human nature: ''Be on guard against the evil of him to whom you did good.'' A poet says:

His sons rewarded Abu 'l-Ghaylān, for his old age
and good deeds, as was rewarded Sinimmār.[1]

In this sentence L (ل = because) is deleted but understood. It puts a reason in place of its opposite. This style puts the accusation in a sharper perspective. The rebellion and trangression of Namrūd would have been understandable if there had been any ungenerosity shown towards him by Allāh. But Allāh did nothing to him except good and He gave him the kingdom too. Therefore, this generosity was mentioned as the cause of his rebellion, to emphasize his ingratitude. In a way, it is like the verse: *And Pharaoh's family took him* (Mūsā) *up, so that he might be an enemy and a grief for them* (28:8).

This is one reason why his getting the kingdom has been mentioned here. There is another reason too: to show that his claim was absurd *ab initio.* He claimed to be god because of the kingdom which was given to him by Allāh; he did not own it himself. He had become Namrūd, the king, the mighty and powerful, because, Allāh had made him so. Strip him of this bounty of Allāh and what was left of him? Just a common man with no special quality or attribute. That is the reason why Allāh did not mention him by name; he was described just as the one who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord. This was done to show his insignificance and lowliness.

Why did Allāh say that it was He who gave Namrūd the kingdom? In previous discourses it has been shown that this cannot be objected to. The kingdom, like all other powers and authorities, is a bounty and grace of Allāh; He gives it to whom He pleases and man has been give the knowledge of God in his nature, and because of that natural instinct he inclines towards Him. Now, if he made good use of that kingdom putting

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1 Sinimmār, an architect of repute, built the palace, al-Khawarnaq, for King Nu'mān. When it was completed, he was thrown down from the roof and thus died. The King gave this order so that he could not build such a palace for anyone else.

every thing in its place, it would be a bliss and blessing for him, as Allāh says: *And seek by means of what Allāh has given you the future abode . . .* (28:77). And if he transgressed the limits and deviated from the right path, it would become a curse and perdition for him, as Allāh says: *Did you not see those who changed Allāh's favour for ungratefulness and made their people to alight into the abode of perdition?* (14:28). It has already been explained that every thing is attributed to Allāh, but in a way that is befitting to His majesty, glory and sanctity — from the view of the good points of that thing, and not from that of its bad points.

One commentators has erroneously thought that the pronoun, ''him'', in the phrase, ''because Allāh had given him the kingdom'' refers to Ibrahim. According to him, it means that Namrud disputed with Ibrāhīm because Allāh had given Ibrāhīm the kingdom; that it refers to the kingdom of Ibrāhīm mentioned in the Qur'ān: *Or do they envy the people for what Allāh has given them of His grace? So indeed we have given to Ibrāhīm's children the Book and the wisdom, and We have given them a great kingdom* (4:54). According to that commentator, the kingdom in the verse under discussion cannot refer to that of Namrūd, because it was a kingdom of oppression and sin; it cannot be said that such a kingdom was given by Allāh.

But this assumption is wrong because:

First: The Qur'ān attributes such a kingdom and many similar things to Allāh. For example, it quotes the believer from the family of Pharaoh as saying: *O my people! Yours is the kingdom this day, being masters in the land. . .* (40:29); and the words of Pharaoh himself are quoted (without any adverse comment): *O my people! Is not the kingdom of Egypt mine?* (43:51). And at the same time it declares: . . . *to Him* (i.e. Allāh) *belongs the kingdom* . . . (64:1). This verse confines the kingdom to Allāh; there is no kingdom but of Him and from Him. The Qur'ān quotes Mūsā (a.s.) as saying: *Our Lord! Surely Thou host given to Pharaoh and his chiefs finery and riches in this world's life . . .* (10:88); and Allāh says about Qārūn: . . . *and We had given him of the treasures, so much so that its keys would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of strength . . .* (28:76); and He says addressing his Prophet: *Leave Me and him whom I created alone, and I gave him vast riches. . .* (74:11 — 12); there are many similar references.

Second: Such an interpretation does not fit the obvious meaning of

the verse. The verse shows that Namrūd was disputing with Ibrāhīm about the latter's belief and monotheism, not that he had any argument with him about his kingdom. The kingdom was already in Namrūd's hands and Ibrāhīm had no worldly kingdom for which Namrūd could have disputed with him.

Third: Everything is attributed to Allāh, as explained earlier, and kingdom is no exception. There is no snag in attributing it to Allāh.

QUR'ĀN: *When Ibrāhīm said: ''My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die'':* Life and death are found even in vegetation; but Ibrāhīm (a.s.), in this argument, meant the life and death found in animals and human beings, or he kept in view their general meaning which included human life and death. The evidence for this meaning may be seen in the reply of Namrūd: ''I give life and cause death''. Obviously Namrūd, by this claim, did not mean the giving of life to vegetables (through tilling and farming), or animals (by breeding inem and bringing the male and female together). This type of life giving was not special to him; any human being could do it. The traditions also support our interpretation: he had two prisoners brought before him, he freed one and killed the other, and then he said: ''I give life and cause death''.

Ibrāhīm (a.s.) selected for his proof the authority of giving life and causing death, because nature, having no life or sense itself, cannot give life to any thing; and more evidently, it cannot be supposed to give life to animals and humans as it is accompanied by sense and perception. And the same is the case with death. Such a clear and indisputable proof failed to convince the people of Namrūd. Their intellectual degradation and mental confusion had sunken far lower than the level which Ibrāhīm (a.s.) had credited them with. They thought that the life and death referred to included the metaphorical meaning of freeing from prison and killing. Thus, Namrūd claimed, and they vouched that he gave life and caused death.

This talk shows how low the level of intellectual development was in that time, as far as abstract and non-material ideas were concerned. Do not be misled by their advanced civilization, signs of which are found in the archaeological remains of the Babylonia of the Chaldeans and the Egypt of the Pharaohs. Material advancement is one thing, and progress in abstract and non-material ideas is something else. We see the same phenomenon in this world of ours which has made a fantastic advancement in the material

field, and has sunk so terribly low in morality, ethics and spiritual knowledge.

Ibrāhīm (a.s.) did not put before them the argument that the whole universe needed an Omnipotent, Omniscient Originator of the heavens and the earth. He had used this method in his early days; and Allāh quotes him as finally saying: *''Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists* (6:79). No doubt, those people, forced by natural instinct, believed vaguely in a Supreme Creator. But their intellectual capacity was too limited to let them clearly and truly understand about that Creator. Had Ibrāhīm (a.s.) put this argument before them, they could not have appreciated it at all. Look, at what they understood from his argument: ''My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die ! ''

QUR'ĀN: *he said: ''I give life and cause death'':* Therefore, I am that Lord of yours who, you say, gives life and causes death.

QUR'ĀN: *Ibrāhīm said: ''So surely Allāh brings the sun from the east, then bring it* (you) *from the west''; thus he who disbelieved was confounded:* When Ibrāhīm (a.s.) saw that his argument based on giving life and death had been twisted by his opponent, and that the public had been mislead by that deception, he thought it would be useless to clarify what he meant by giving life and causing death. Instead, he switched to another argument. Even then, he based this second argument on his opponent's claim in the first argument. That is why he began the second argument with ''So''; it shows a connection with the preceding sentence, and its import is as follows: If what you say is correct, and you are my Lord, and the Lord, as we both accept, manages and looks after this universe, then Allāh manages the sun by bringing it from the east; so show your authority by bringing from the west. It will clearly prove that you are the Lord, as Allāh is the Lord of everything, or that you are Lord of Lords. Thus, the disbeliever was confounded.

Ibrāhīm (a.s.) offered his second argument as an offshoot of Namrūd's claim, to remove the chance of someone thinking that Namrūd's argument was complete, perfect and irrefutable. And he changed the word ''my Lord'' (used in the first argument) to ''Allāh'' (in this argument) because the opponent had misused that adjective and claimed that it referred to him. To remove the chance of that type of sophistry, Ibrāhīm (a.s.) used the proper name, ''Allāh''.

It has been described earlier that it was not possible for Namrūd to reply to this argument in any way, and, as a result, he was confounded and remained silent.

QUR'ĀN: *And Allāh does not guide aright the unjust people:* Apparently it gives the reason for Namrūd' being confounded, not for his disbelief. Allāh did not guide him, and, therefore, he was humiliated; had Allāh guided him aright, he would have been able to reply to Ibrāhīm. It does not say that Allāh did not guide him and therefore he became an unbeliever. Obviously, the talk centres around his dispute and argument, and is not about his belief.

The word ''unjust people'' hints at the cause of not being guided. Allāh does not guide them because they are unjust. The same point has been kept in view wherever such sentences have been revealed. Allāh says: *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allāh while he is invited to Islam? And Allāh does not guide the unjust people* (61:7); *The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah, then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books; evil is the similitude of the people who belie the signs of Allāh; and Allāh does not guide the unjust people* (62:5). ''Transgression'' is likewise the cause of not being guided, as Allāh says: *but when they turned aside; Allāh made their hearts turn aside; and Allāh does not guide the transgressing people* (61:5).

In short, injustice is to turn aside from the path of justice, and to leave aside what should be done, and to do what should not be done. It diverts man from his intended goal, and leads him to disappointment and failure in the life hereafter. This fact is made abundantly clear in many verses of the Qur'ān, which puts much emphasis on it.

GOOD AND EVIL DEEDS, *VIS-A-VIS* GUIDANCE AND MISGUIDANCE

Good deeds cause guidance and evil deeds make one go astray. It is a universal rule to which there is no exception. The Qur'ān describes it in different words, and has based on it many of its realities. Allāh says: *Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it* (to its goal) (20:50). It means that everything, after its creation is completed, is

guided by Allāh to the goals of its creation and to its perfection. For this purpose, it has been bound to other things, and takes their advantage through action and reaction, uniting and separating, associating and dissociating, advancing and retreating, taking and leaving and so on and so forth. No mistake occurs in the effect of the system of creation, and it never misses its targets. For example, when a fire licks dry wood, it does not want to cool it; and when a tree grows it does not intend to make itself smaller. The Qur'ān says: . . . *surely my Lord is on the straight path* (11:56). Thus, in the world of creation the effect never fails to follow the cause, and there is no discord in it.

The above paragraph gives us two axioms: creative guidance is general and the fact that no mistake ever occurs in creative matters. These two realities are the basis of the system of cause and effect. There is a way, or ways, between a thing and its intended goal, and only through those specific ways it can reach there. A seed grows into a tree only if it passes along its own particular path, complying with all its conditions and means. And a fruit tree grows only its own particular fruit, not something else. In short, each cause creates its own particular effect, and each effect follows its own particular cause. Allāh says: *And as for the good land, its vegetation springs forth* (abundantly) *by the permission of its Lord, and* (as for) *that which is bad* (its herbage) *comes forth but scantily* (7:58). Reason and experience vouch for it; otherwise, the law of cause and effect would go awry.

Creation guides everything to a particular goal; and that goal can be reached through that particular way. It is the system created by Allāh who has perfected everything. Every link in this chain of causes leads to a particular end; and if a single link is changed, the effect will invariably change. This much about creation.

The same rule applies to other fields like social affairs. Society too is the result of creative factors and follows the laws of ''creation''. Social affairs and the activities of society are connected with their own effects: those activities can result only in those particular effects, and those effects can be produced only by those particular activities. Good upbringing can be accomplished only by a ''good'' tutor; if a ''bad'' tutor brings up a child, even if he shows himself to be a good man and actually sticks to good and proper methods in his bringing-up the hidden evil will unfailingly pollute the mind of the child, and it will

produce an undesirable and evil result. A hundred veils and a thousand curtains cannot prevent the tutor's spiritual evil effecting the character of the pupil. When someone unlawfully takes hold of a country, or when an incompetent judge sits and delivers judgements on public disputes, or when someone takes upon himself, without the sanction of the *sharī'ah,* to discharge a social responsibility, its evil effects most certainly manifest themselves in society. Let a wrong disguise itself as right, or an evil masquerade as good, or a lie take the place of truth, or dishonesty appear as honesty, or deception camouflage itself in sincerity — all these disguises may fool the onlookers for a period, but ultimately all the protective coverings must come off, revealing the ugly reality underneath. It is the system created by Allāh in His creatures, and: *you shall not find any alteration in the system of Allāh, and you shall not find any change in the system of Allāh* (35:43).

The truth does not die, nor does its effect fade, even if, for a short time, it is not perceived by lookers on. And a lie can never stand on its feet, nor can its effect be sustained — even if at times it causes confusion. Allāh says: *So that He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false . . .* (8:8). Allāh shows the truth of what is true by stabilizing its effect; and manifests the falsehood of what is false by exposing its corruption and depravity and unmasking its reality. He says: *Have you not seen how Allāh sets forth a parable of a good word* (being) *like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and whose branches are in heaven, yielding its fruits on every moment by the permission of its Lord? And Allāh sets forth parables for men that they may reflect. And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface, it has no stability. Allāh confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter, and Allāh lets the unjust go astray, and Allāh does what He pleases* (14:24 — 27). Thus Allāh lets the unjust people go astray in their affairs. And what is their affair? It is that they want their evil ways to lead to good results. As Allāh quotes Yūsuf (a.s.) as saying: *I seek Allāh's refuge! Surely my Lord made good my abode: Surely the unjust do not prosper* (12:23). An unjust person cannot prosper in his injustice, nor can his injustice lead him to where a virtuous man is led by his virtue and a pious one by his piety. Allāh says: *And* (as for) *those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them unto Our ways; and Allāh*

is most surely with the doers of good (29:69). And He says: . . . *and the* (good) *end is for piety* (20:132).

The Qur'ānic verses with this meaning are very numerous; but the most complete and most comprehensive is the following:

He sends down water from the heavens, then the valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam; and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of (making) *ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it, thus does Allāh compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth, thus does Allāh set forth parables* (13:17).

As mentioned earlier, reason also confirms this truth. The universal system of cause and effect demands it and human experience testifies that it is so. Every man knows one or another episode which shows that the end of unjust people is always bad, and that their endeavours never succeed.

QUR'ĀN: *Or like him who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs: ''al-Khāwiyah''* (الخَاوِيَةُ) means empty. The Arabs say *khawati 'd-dār* (خَوَتِ الدَّارُ) to indicate that ''the house became empty''. *''al-'Urūsh''* (العُرُوْشُ) is the plural of *al-'arsh* (العَرْشُ = trellis); it is a roof-like structure standing on poles or pillars used as support for climbing plants, like vines. Allāh says: *garden trellised and untrellised* (6:141). This word is also used for *as-saqf* (السَّقْفُ = roof). But there is a difference *as-saqf* is only a roof or house-top which is laid on the walls: *al-'arsh* is the top together with its poles or pillars. Because of this difference, it is idiomatic to say for a ruined village that, *''hiya khāwiyatun 'alā 'urūshihā''* (هِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلي عُرُوْشِهَا) which literally means, ''it is empty on its trellis''; but it would be wrong to say: ''empty on its roof''.

Many explanations have been given by the commentators for the conjunctive ''Or'' in ''Or like him who . . .'' It is said that:

1) It is in conjunction with ''him (he) who disputed with Ibrāhīm'', in the previous verse; and *''K''* (ك = like) is in place of *mithl* (مِثْل = like). The meaning accordingly is, ''Or have you seen like him who passed . . .'' This commentator thinks that the word ''like'' in this context indicates that it is a separate proof.

2) The word ''like'' is extra. The meaning, accordingly, will be

‘‘Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrāhīm . . . or him who passed . . . ’’

3) The conjunction is of meaning, and not of words. The meaning is, ‘‘Have you seen like him who disputed . . . or like him who passed . . . ’’

4) It is the continuation of the argument of Ibrāhīm in reply to his opponent’s claim. According to this interpretation, Ibrāhīm told Namrūd that if he claimed to give life then he should give life like him who passed by a town . . .

But you will notice that none of the above explanations is satisfactory.

The author believes that the conjunction is of meaning, as claimed in the third explanation, but not in the way described there. Allāh had earlier said: ‘‘Allāh is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of darkness into the light; and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are rebels; they take them out of the light into the darkness’’. It had shown that Allāh guides the believers to the truth, and that He does not guide the disbelievers; instead they are misled by the guardians whom they have taken for themselves. Now Allāh gives three examples, showing three consecutive methods of His guidance. Guidance is of three types, or, let us say, three stages:—

First: Guidance through reasoning and argument, as is seen in the story of Namrūd who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord. Allāh guided Ibrāhīm to the truth, and his opponent was misguided by his disbelief. In this story the guidance of Ibrāhīm is not mentioned clearly; rather more attention is given to his opponent’s affairs, and it has thrown light on a new fact: ‘‘Allāh does not guide aright the unjust people’’.

Second: Guidance through demonstration, as is seen in the story of him who passed by a town which had fallen down upon its roofs. In it, what had seemed difficult to him (i.e. ‘‘how Allāh would make a thing alive after its death?’’)was shown to him actually happening. He was given death and then made alive. In this way he was guided to the truth through demonstration.

Third: Guidance by demonstrating the fact and simultaneously unveiling its cause. It is the most effective method and the highest stage of guidance. This method was used in the third story, in which Ibrāhīm, by permission of Allāh, made the four birds alive.

Let us suppose that a man has not seen cheese, and has some doubt

about it. His doubts may be removed if someone who has seen it and tasted it testifies before him about it. The second and more effective method is to show him a piece of cheese and make him taste it. The third and the most effective way of removing the doubt would be to put a pot of milk before him and make cheese from it before his eyes and then let him taste it.

The three verses describe these three consecutive stages. Each one begins in a different style: ‘‘Did you not see him who . . .’’, ‘‘Or like him who passed by a town . . .’’, ‘‘And (remember) when Ibrāhīm said . . .’’ Each of these styles could have been used to describe the three events. It could have been said: Allāh guides the believers to the truth; have you not looked at the story of Ibrāhīm and Namrūd, or at the story of him who passed by a town, or at the story of Ibrahim and the birds. Alternatively, it could have been said: Allāh guides the believers to the truth; either as He guided Ibrāhīm in his dispute with Namrūd (and it was one way of guidance), or as He guided him who passed by a town (and it was another way of guidance), or as He did in the event of Ibrāhīm and the birds (and it was the third way of guidance.

Thirdly it could have been said: Allāh guides the believers to the truth; remember the episodes which prove it — remember the story of the dispute, and remember him who passed by a town, and remember when Ibrāhīm said: *‘‘My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead.’’*

But Allāh used a different style for each verse, as it is more refreshing for the mind, and excites a new interest in each episode.

Now we may revert to the original topic, how this verse is in conjunction with the preceding one. The conjunctive ‘‘or’’ in ‘‘or like him’’ joins this sentence with a deleted but understood word in the preceding verse. The reconstructed sentences would be like this: Either like him who disputed with Ibrāhīm . . . or like him who passed by a town. Likewise, the conjunctive ‘‘and’’ in the next verse joins it with deleted but understood words in the preceding two verses. The sentences then would be like this: Remember the story of dispute . . . and remember him who passed by a town . . . and remember when Ibrāhīm said . . .

Allāh has not disclosed the identity of him who passed by. Nor has the name of the town or the people who used to live in it been mentioned. Nor have those been identified for whom the said passer-by was made a

sign. It would appear that their identities should have been disclosed as it would have removed many doubts. But a far more important consideration made it necessary to keep all these details vague.

The sign shown, that is, giving life to the dead, was a very compelling and overwhelming one, as was the guidance resulting from it; also, the passer-by had used words which reflected his thought that it was not an easy task. Therefore, the norms of eloquence demanded that it be described as a very insignificant affair, so that the said passer-by as well as the audience of the Qur'ān would not be over-awed by it; and so that they could appreciate that it was not a big task as far as the power of Allāh was concerned. Have you not seen that great people talk about great affairs and about their great officers and nobles in a very ordinary manner; they want to emphasize that such affairs or such people have no greatness for the speakers. The same principle has been applied here: bare facts have been mentioned, but all details as to who, where and when have been omitted; it is to show that this affair was not an important one in the eyes of Allāh. It was for the same reason that the name of the opponent of Ibrāhīm (in the first story) was omitted, and the names of the birds and the hills, and the number of pieces the birds were cut into, and so on, in the third story.

Only the name of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) has been mentioned in the two stories. The Qur'ān accords him a special honour and distinction. For example: *And this was Our argument which We gave to Ibrāhīm against his people; We exalt in dignity whom We please* . . . (6:83); *And thus did We show Ibrāhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that he might be of those who are sure* (6:75). The same special consideration prompted mentioning his name in the two stories.

The point mentioned above also explains why Allāh mentions the matters of giving life and causing death, in most places, as a very unimportant and insignificant thing; as He says: *And He it is Who originates the creation, then returns it, and it is most easy to Him; and His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens and in the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise* (30:27); *He said: ''O my Lord! how shall 1 have a son, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached indeed the extreme degree of old age?'' He said: ''So shall it be; your Lord says: It is easy to* Me, *and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing''* (19:8 — 9).

QUR'ĀN: *he said: ''How will Allāh give it life after its death?''* ''It'' refers to the ''town''; but it metaphorically means ''people of the town''. It is like the words of the Qur'ān: *And ask the town in which we were . . .* (12:82); that is, ''the people of the town''.

He uttered these words because he felt that it was a very great thing and that it manifested the power of Allāh as few other things did; not that he thought life-after-death improbable. That is why he said at the end of the episode, ''I know that Allāh has power over all things''. He did not say, 'Now I know', as the wife of the chief of Egypt had said: *Now has the truth become established. . .* (12:51). Further details will be given later.

Furthermore, the passer-by was a prophet to whom Allāh had spoken, and was a sign sent to the people; and the prophets are sinless. They can never entertain any doubt or suspicion about Resurrection, which is one of the pillars of the religion.

QUR'ĀN: *So Allāh caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life:* The clear meaning is that he was given death by the taking out of his soul, remained dead for a hundred years, then was made alive by the returning of his soul to him.

One commentator has given a strange explanation of this verse. He says: The ''death'' mentioned in this verse means a coma, that is, a prolonged loss of consciousness in which the subject remains barely alive but has no sense or feeling. It may continue for days, months and even years, as is evident from the story of the Fellows of the Cave and their sleep in the cave which lasted for three hundred and nine years; then they were awakened. Allah has used that sleep and re-awakening as a proof of Resurrection. Therefore, this story too is like that one.

The said commentator goes on to say: The known duration of coma does not exceed a few years. A coma lasting for a hundred years is an unusual occurrence, but He who puts a man in a coma for a few years also has the power to keep him in that condition for a hundred years; and when it comes to accept what is clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān, we believe that we should only see whether it is possible or impossible; and if it is possible we must accept it. Allāh has offered this episode of keeping him in a coma for a hundred years and then returning his senses and feelings to him after such a long period as a proof that life can be returned to the dead after a gap of thousands of years.

This was his explanation. Let us suppose for the time being that the Fellows of the Cave were kept in a coma — the word used for them in the Qur'ān is ''asleep'', not comatose. But how could their supposed coma infect this passer-by? The Qur'ān clearly says: ''Allāh caused him to die''. Death means loss of life; and not coma. A commentator has no right to invent a meaning for a word. He has used analogy where no one has allowed it, and that is in the matter of finding the meaning of a word. And if Allāh could keep that passer-by comatose for a hundred years when it is not an usual occurrence, why could not He keep him dead for a hundred years and then resurrect him? One unusual occurrence is like another, according to the said commentator. So why invent one meaning and reject the other which incidently is the real meaning? The trouble with him is that, for his own reasons, he thinks that the resurrection of the dead in this world is impossible — without giving any reason to support his belief. That is why he has misinterpreted the next sentences, ''and look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh''. We shall comment upon it afterwards.

In short, the meaning of the words: ''Allāh caused him to die . . . then raised him to life'', is quite clear, and no doubt can be entertained about it, especially when we look at the preceding and following sentences: ''How will Allāh give it life after its death?''; ''look at your food and drink — years have not passed over it''; ''and look at your donkey''; ''and look at the bones''.

QUR'ĀN: *He said: ''How long have you tarried?''He said: ''I have tarried a day or a part of a day''. Said He: ''Nay! You have tarried a hundred years'': ''al-Labth''* (اللَّبْثُ) is to tarry, to stay, to abide. The uncertainty in the reply, ''a day or a part of a day'', shows that the time of day of his resurrection was different from that of his death — for example, the forenoon and afternoon. He thought that he had slept and was now woken, then he looked at the difference in the time, and was uncertain whether a night has passed while he was still asleep. Therefore, he said: ''a day'' (if a night has passed), ''or a part of a day'' (if he had woken up the same day). Allāh said: ''Nay! you have tarried a hundred years.''

QUR'ĀN: *''then look at your food and drink — years have not passed over it; . . . then clothe them with flesh'':* There are many apparently puzzling things in these sentences: The word, ''look'', has been repeated

three times, when, at a first glance, only one would have been enough; there is mention of food, drink and a donkey, when apparently there was no need for it; and the sentence, ‘‘and that We may make you a sign to men’’, has been written in between, when seemingly it would have been more appropriate after the next sentence about assembling the bones and clothing them with flesh. Moreover, what he had wondered about, the resurrection of bodies after a long gap, after undergoing all types of deterioration, had been clearly demonstrated by his own resurrection; then what was the need to tell him to look at the bones? But if we ponder deeply on the various implications of this verse, all these doubts will be removed. Let us look at the story, which is as follows:

The verse make it clear that the passer-by was a virtuous servant of Allāh, who was well aware of divine power and majesty, and followed His commandments. Not only this, he was a prophet whom Allāh had spoken to. The clear implication of his words: ‘‘I know that Allāh has power over all things’’, is that he was fully aware of the power of Allāh even before this episode. And the style of the sentences, ‘‘then raised him to life. He said: ‘How long have you tarried?’ ’’ implies that he was well accustomed to being spoken to by Allāh, and that it was not the first revelation. Otherwise, the sentence should have been somewhat like this: ‘then when He raised him to life, He said . . .’ See how the first divine talk with Mūsā has been mentioned: *So when he came to it, a voice called: O Mūsā* (20:11); *And when he came to it a voice called from the right side* . . . (28:30).

He had departed from his home for a place which was at some distance from his town. This is inferred from the facts that he rode on his donkey, and took food and drink for his provisions. On the way, he passed by a town which had fallen ‘‘on its roofs’’. It was not his intended destination; but as he passed by it, he stood there, seeing in it a warning lesson for mankind, a town turned into ruins, whose inhabitants had perished, overtaken by death all together, whose rotten bones were scattered everywhere in full view of the passers-by. He pointed to the dead and said: ‘‘How will Allāh give it life after its death?’’ He did not mean ‘‘How will this town be populated again?’’ Otherwise, he would have used the word *‘‘yu‘ammir’’* (يُعَمِّرُ = will make populated), and not *‘‘yuḥyī’’* (يُحْيِي = will make alive) which he did use. Moreover, a ruined town may become inhabited again, and there is nothing extraordinary in

this development to cause wonder and awe. How do we know that the bodies and bones were in full view of the passers-by? Because if they had been buried and he had stood looking at their graves, Allāh would have clearly mentioned the graves, instead of the town.

Anyhow, he stood taking lessons from the scene before his eyes. He was over-awed by it and thought about the length of time involved, and the continuing deterioration of the parts of the body until it turns into dust. At this stage, he said: ‘‘How will Allāh give it life after its death?’’ This question was based on two factors: The length of time, (How will Allāh give it life after such a long gap since its death?) and the deterioration of the body (How will it be resurrected when all its parts and limbs have been scattered and untold number of changes have come over it?) Therefore, Allāh explained both questions together. The first question was answered by giving him death and resurrecting him after a hundred years. The second question was answered by giving life to the bones of his donkey under his own eyes.

Thus, Allāh gave him death and then raised him from the dead. The two things happened at different times of the day, as has been explained above. Allāh asked him: ‘‘How long have you tarried?’’ He replied: ‘‘I have tarried a day or a part of a day’’. Obviously, he was given death in the early part of the day, and resurrected in the afternoon. Had it been the other way round, he would have said, ‘‘a day’’ without any hesitation. Allāh pointed out to him: ‘‘Nay! you have tarried a hundred years.’’ Thus he realized that he had thought a hundred years like a day or a part of a day. This was the reply to his question about the length of time.

Then Allāh gave him the proof of his remaining dead for a hundred years by saying, ‘‘then look at your food and drink — years have not passed over it; and look at your donkey’’. As he had not realized that he had died and had been brought to life after such a long time, the information that he had tarried a hundred years was liable to be doubted (not necessarily by him), because his body had not changed at all; and if a man dies and a hundred years pass over him, his body usually undergoes innumerable changes until the bones rot and turn into dust. To remove this possible doubt, Allāh ordered him to look at his food and drink which had not changed a bit all this time; and to look at his donkey whose bones had rotted. The condition of the donkey would indicate the

length of time and the condition of the food and the drink would show him the possibility of remaining in one condition for such a long period without undergoing any change.

It shows that the donkey had also been given death and had become rotten. But the Qur'ān, in its unsurpassed good style, did not like to mention the donkey's death when it had said that the prophet had been caused to die.

In this way Allāh made him realize that his amazement, which was based on the length of time, was not appropriate. He himself admitted that a hundred years were to him like a day or a part of a day. It was the same feeling which the resurrected will show on the Day of Resurrection. Thus he became aware that the time passed between death and resurrection, whether short or long, has no effect whatsoever on the power of Allāh Who rules over everything. His power is no subservient to time and space. Changes, whether big or small, which occur in a body make no difference to His power. Giving life to old dead bodies is as easy to Him as resurrecting new ones. Old and new, far and near, are all equal to Him. As He says: *Surely they think it to be far off, and We see it nigh* (70:6 — 7); . . . *the matter of the Hour is but as the twinkling of an eye or it is still nearer* . . . (16:77).

''And that We make you a sign to men'': The conjunction ''and'' signifies that there was some other purpose also. It means: We did what We did so that We may explain to you certain things and so that We may make you a sign to men. Thus there were two aims: the purpose of showing him how Allāh assembled the bones and clothed them with flesh was to show him how He gives life to the dead; and the purpose of causing him to die and to make him alive again was to demonstrate that fact to him and to make him a sign for other men. That is why the sentence, ''and that We make you a sign to men'', was written before the mention of the bones and their being clothed by flesh.

The above discourse also shows why the word ''look'' has been repeated thrice in this verse. Each order has a special purpose which is not shared by the other two.

Allāh gave him death and then made him alive. In this way, he himself experienced what most people will feel on the Day or Resurrection; as Allāh says: *And at the time when the Hour shall come, the guilty shall swear* (that) *they did not tarry but an hour; thus they*

used to utter lies. And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: Certainly you tarried according to the decree of Allāh till the Day of Resurrection; so this is, the Day of Resurrection, but you did not know (30:55 — 56).

Then Allāh explained to him the second aspect of his question: How will the parts and components of the body return to their original shape, after all those innumerable changes? So Allāh told him to ‘‘look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh’’. Obviously, it refers to the bones of the donkey, and not to those of the dead people of the town. Otherwise, not he alone, but all the resurrected people of the town would have become ‘‘signs’’ of Allāh to the mankind.

The commentator whose misinterpretation of ‘‘death’’ and ‘‘life’’ we have commented upon earlier explains away this sentence in a strange way as well. He says that the ‘‘bones’’ refer to the bones in a living body; the fact that they grow and are clothed with flesh is a proof of resurrection. The Creator Who gave it life and growth is surely the Resurrector of the dead; surely He has power over everything. Allāh has argued for resurrection in a like manner by referring to the dead earth which is made alive again with vegetation.

Such an interpretation is obviously absurd.

The explanation which we have given above show that the whole story beginning from: ‘‘So Allāh caused him to die’’ upto the end of the verse is one single reply to the prophet’s question, ‘‘How will Allāh give it life after its death?’’ There is no repetition in it at all.

QUR’ĀN: *So when it became clear to him, he said: ‘‘I know that Allāh has power over all things’’:* He returns, after the demonstration, to the knowledge which he already had before that. It seems that when the question as to how Allāh could make it alive came into his mind, he satisfied his curiosity by remembering the all-encompassing power of Allāh. Then Allāh made the matter clear to him by demonstrating how He gives life to the dead. After this re-assurance, he clearly knew the truth of his previous knowledge, and spoke to Allāh in these words, the import of which is as follows: Thou hast always guided me aright; and what I had always known about Thy Omnipotence was not to be doubted; it was the truth which I should always rely upon.

One may find examples of such re-assurance everywhere. Many are

the times when a man has definite knowledge of a subject, then some thought occurs in his mind which goes against that, not because of any doubt or ignorance, but because of some other factors. Thereupon he satisfies himself about the previous certainty, till the doubt is removed. Then, he returns to his previous knowledge and says: 'I know that it is so'. In this way his knowledge is confirmed and his perplexity is removed.

In short, the sentence, ''I know that Allāh has power over all things'', does not mean that before it became clear to him, he was in some doubt about the power of Allāh. Such an interpretation would be wrong, because:

First: He was a prophet, who was spoken to by Allāh. And the prophets cannot be ignorant of Allāh's person and attributes; and especially of His Omnipotence which is an attribute of person.

Second: Had he been ignorant of Allāh's power, he would have said, ''Now I know . . .'' or ''Now I knew . . .'' But he said: ''I know'', that is, from before.

Third: What he had seen was a proof that Allāh had power to give life to the dead. It did not prove that He had power ''over all things''. But he said that he knew that Allāh had power over all things. It shows that this knowledge was not based on that demonstration.

Of course, it is possible that a man of lesser strength of character would be stunned and bewildered by such a manifestation of divine power, and would declare, forgetting all other things, that He Who gives life to the dead has power over all things. But it would be just a conjecture, based on fear and awe; it would be wiped out as soon as that fear or awe was removed. Moreover, it would not be acceptable to him who has not experienced that fear or awe. In any case, such an illogical conclusion cannot be relied upon. But we see in this verse that Allāh confirms his declaration by putting it under His seal of approval. It naturally, follows that this knowledge had not come to him as a result of that manifestation.

In other words, if he had acquired that knowledge through that manifestation, then all he would have known was that Allāh had the power to give life to the dead. He should therefore not have said that Allāh had the power over all things. Such talk would be wrong in fact, and would be beneath the dignity of a prophet.

QUR'ĀN: *And* (remember) *when Ibrāhīm said: ''My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead'':* It has been explained earlier that the conjunctive ''and'' is related to a deleted (but understood) word, ''remember''; and that that deleted word governs the adverb ''when''. Someone has said that the word ''when'' is governed by ''What ! and do you not believe?'' But this is patently wrong.

The plea of Ibrāhīm, ''My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead'', proves:

First: that he asked for demonstration, not for logical reasoning. The prophets (and especially a prophet like Ibrāhīm, the friend of Allāh) are too great to believe in resurrection on the Day of Judgement without any logical reason. A belief without reason is either blind following, or also is based on defective intellection. And neither of these two can be attributed to Ibrāhīm (a.s.). Moreover, he used the word ''how'' which is used to ask about the state and condition of a thing, not about the thing itself. When you say: ''Have you seen Zayd?'', the question is about the seeing itself. But if you say: ''How did you see Zayd?'', the seeing is already known and accepted; the question is only about the condition of it and its particulars. When Ibrāhīm (a.s.) asked, ''how Thou givest life to the dead'', he already knew by logic and reason that Allāh gives life to the dead; now he only wanted to see how it was done.

Second: that the question asked by Ibrāhīm (a.s.) could mean either of the two following things:

1) How could the material parts of a dead man come together after being scattered hither and thither, and how could they accept life and become alive? In other words, how could they be governed by the power of Allāh?

2) How does Allāh bestow life on the dead. The first question is concerned with the effect and the result; the second one with the reason and the cause. This second aspect is in a way the kingdom, which Allāh mentions in the Qur'ān: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, ''Be'', and it is. Therefore, glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things, and to Him you shall be brought back* (36:82 — 83).

Which of the two questions did Ibrāhīm (a.s.) ask? He asked the second one, and not the first, because:

a) he asked ''how Thou givest life''. He wanted to see the action of

Allāh. The effect of the action on the dead was not his primary concern; otherwise he would have asked ‘‘how the dead become alive’’;

b) if he only wanted to see how dead bodies respond to life, Allāh could have given life to any dead animal before the eyes of Ibrāhīm (a.s.), and there would have been no need to make it happen in Ibrāhīm’s hands;

c) if he wanted to see how a dead body comes to life, then the story should have been ended on something like, ‘‘Know that Allāh has the power over all things’’, and not on the words actually used, ‘‘Know that Allāh is Mighty, Wise.’’ The Qur’ān always uses the appropriate adjectives at the end of verses. The first meaning of the question concerns the power of Allāh and if that was the purpose of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) in asking, the attribute of power should have been mentioned at the end. But Allāh used the attributes of Might and Wisdom which are more appropriate for bestowing of life, rather than for the acceptance of life by matter.

A commentator has interpreted this verse in a strange way, which is given hereunder. (Our comments on this interpretation will be given afterwards.) He says:

When Ibrāhīm (a.s.) said: ‘‘My Lord! Show me . . .’’, he only wanted to ‘‘know’’ how the dead were given life; he did not want to ‘‘see’’ how it was done. And the reply does not go beyond that information. The said commentator further says: There is nothing in this verse to show that Allāh ordered him to give life to the birds. Nor that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) did as he was ordered. Not every order is intended to be complied with. Information is often given in the imperative mood. Suppose that someone asks you how ink is made. You tell him: ‘‘Take this and that material and then mix it in this way, and your ink shall be ready.’’ You want to explain to him how ink is made; not that you are ordering him to make ink then and there, even though you use the imperative mood.

He further says: There are many verses in the Qur’ān in which information has been given in the form of an order. This particular verse gives just a similitude for the resurrection of the dead. It tells Ibrāhīm: Take four birds, make them tame and train them so that they obey your call. (The birds are the fittest of all animals for such training.) Then put each bird on a mountain, and then call them. See how swiftly they come to you, their separation and their distance from you shall not prevent

them from coming to you, flying. The same is the similitude of the decree of your Lord. When He intends to give life to the dead, He calls them with the word of creation, ‘‘Be alive’’, and they at once become alive. It is the same as was in the beginning of creation. He said to the heaven and to the earth, ‘‘Come both willingly or unwillingly’’; they both said, ‘‘We come willingly’’.

The said commentator has given two ‘‘proofs’’ for his interpretation:

First: The word of Allāh, *‘‘fa-ṣurhunna’’* (فَصُرْهُنَّ) according to him means ‘‘make them inclined’’. That is, tame them and make them affable towards yourself. It is because of this meaning that it is followed by the preposition *‘‘ilā’’* (اِلي = to). The verb *ṣāra* (صَارَ) when followed by *ilā* gives the meaning of inclination.

He says that it is wrong to say (as commentators have done) that *fa-ṣurhunna* means, ‘‘then cut them into pieces after killing them.’’ This interpretation is not in conformity with the preposition mentioned above.

He further says: Some commentators have said that the preposition is related to the word *‘‘fa-khudh’’* (فَخُذْ = then take), and the verse in effect says, ‘‘then take to you four of the birds, then cut them into pieces’’. But such an interpretation is against the clear sequence of the words.

Second: Apparently, the pronouns in the words *fa ṣurhunna* (make them inclined), *‘‘minhunna’’* (مِنْهُنَّ = a part of them), *‘‘ud‘uhunna’’*(اُدْعُهُنَّ = call them) and *‘‘ya’tīnaka’’* (يَأْتِيْنَكَ = they will come to you), all refer to the ‘‘birds’’. If we accept the interpretation of the commentators that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) was told to cut the birds into pieces and that after mixing their parts, he was to put portions of them on mountains, and after that he was to call them, then the pronouns would differ in their meanings: the first two would refer to the birds, and the third and fourth to the pieces of the birds. And such a thing is against the apparent meaning of the Qur’ān.

The said commentator wrote the above-mentioned two arguments. Another commentator, who agrees with him, has added three more ‘‘proofs’’, which we append below:

Third: What is the meaning of ‘‘showing how a thing is created?’’ Does it mean demonstrating how the scattered parts and components are joined and assembled and how they change back to their original living

shape? If yes, then it could not be shown by cutting the birds into pieces, mixing them together and putting small portions on far away hills. How could Ibrāhīm (a.s.) see from such a distance what changes and movements were occurring in the smallest atoms of the pieces? Or, does it mean showing him how Allāh gives life to the dead? In other words, does it mean comprehending the reality of the creative decree? But the creative decree is the divine will which brings things into being; and the Qur'ān openly says, and Muslims agree, that it is impossible for a human being to comprehend the creative decree of Allāh; the attributes of Allāh cannot be subjected to ''how''.

Fourth: The words of the Qur'ān ''then place on every mountain . . .'' point to some delay, and it is in conformity with the idea of taming and training. The same is the import of the words *fa ṣurhunna* which should be translated, ''then make them inclined''. The idea of killing the birds and cutting them into pieces does not conform with the ''delay'' implied in *''thumma''* (ثُمَّ = then).

Fifth: If the events occurred as most of the commentators say, then the verse should have ended on the divine name ''Powerful'' and not on ''Mighty, Wise''; because ''Mighty'' is the one who cannot be comprehended.

The author's comments: The above was the interpretation of this group. But if you ponder on the explanation given by us earlier, you will realize that none of their arguments are valid. The plea of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) begins with the word, ''show me''; then come the words, ''how Thou givest life . . .''; and the verse goes on describing how this ''giving life'' was performed in the hands of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) himself. Add to it the words, ''then place on every mountain a part of them''; clearly ''a part'' refers to a part of the bird, not a complete and alive bird. All this clearly negates the interpretation offered by these people.

Now let us look at their arguments.

Reply to the first argument: *fa ṣurhunn* definitely means, ''then cut them into pieces''. The preposition *ilā* (to) is used here to imply inclination. This implication of it was described in the commentary of the words *''arrafathu ilā nisā'ikum* (الرَّفَثُ إِلي نِسَآئِكُمْ = to go into your wives) (in verse 187 of this chapter). Thus, its complete meaning is: cut them into pieces inclining them towards you.

Reply to the second argument: All the four pronouns refer to the

birds. Now comes the question: how could the pronouns in ''call them'' and ''they will come to you'' refer to the birds, when there was no bird at all, when only the pieces of those birds had remained? This question arises because the said commentator does not know the difference between mere verbal speech and creative speech. See, for example, the verse: *Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it was a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: ''Come both, willingly or unwillingly'' They both said: ''We come willingly''* (41:11). Here Allāh addressed the heaven, while it was non-existent; only its matter was present at that time. Likewise, Ibrāhīm (a.s.) was told to call the birds, while they did not exist; only their pieces existed at that time. Then there is the verse: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, 'Be', and it is* (36:82). Here a non-existent thing is addressed by the creative speech ''Be''.

The fact is that verbal speech requires an addressee to exist before the speech. But the opposite is true in the case of creative speech. There, the existence of the addressee follows that speech. In this case, the talk, address or speech means ''creation''; and existence is caused by creation. In the above-mentioned verse 36:82 ''and it is'' (i.e., existence) depends on the creative word ''Be'' (i.e., creation).

Reply to the third argument: We believe that the second alternative is correct: that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) wanted to see how Allāh gives life to the dead; he did not want to see how a dead body accepts life.

The said commentator has argued against this alternative. He says that it implies comprehension of the will of Allāh, which, being an attribute of Allāh, is impossible to comprehend.

But the fact is that the will of Allāh is an attribute of action, and is inferred from divine actions like creating, giving life, and so forth. What is impossible to comprehend is the Person of Allāh, as He says: . . . *they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110).

Will is deduced from action. It is creation accompanied by the existence of the created thing. It is the word ''Be'' mentioned in verse 36:82: ''. . . that He says to it 'Be' and it is''. This word, ''Be'', is the kingdom of everything that is mentioned in the next verse: *Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of everything . . .* (36:83). And Allāh has said that He had shown Ibrāhīm (a.s.) the great kingdom of His creation: *And thus did We show Ibrāhīm the kingdom*

of the heavens and the earth, and that he might be of those who are sure (6:75). Obviously, among the great kingdom shown to Ibrāhīm (a.s.) was this giving life to the birds, mentioned in this verse.

Why are these people so confused? It is because they do not understand the force behind such miraculous happenings. They think that when Ibrāhīm (a.s.) called the birds and they became alive, or when 'Īsā (a.s.) said to a dead body, ''Rise up by permission of Allāh'' and it rose up, or when Sulaymān (a.s.) ordered the wind to blow and it did so, it was because of some effective cause which was hidden in those words by Allāh; or because of the thinking process of these prophets which showed itself in these words (made of letters), as our words lead one to their meanings. These people do not realize that all this was based upon these prophets' spiritual connection with the divine power which can never be overpowered; and with Allāh's Omnipotence which knows no bounds and which is the real power that brings everything into being.

Reply to the fourth argument: The delay inferred from the word *thumma* (then) is found in cutting the birds into pieces as well, dividing and mixing the parts and putting them on various mountains. This matter needs no elaboration.

Reply to the fifth argument: This argument, in fact, goes against the objector. What he wants to prove is that Allāh only explained to Ibrāhīm (a.s.), in an academic and theoretical manner, how the things were made alive; He did not show it to him by demonstration. If that was the case, then the verse should have been ended on the adjective ''Powerful'', instead of ''Mighty, Wise''. We have explained earlier that the adjectives ''Mighty'' and ''Wise'' are more appropriate for our explanation of the verse.

Another commentator has interpreted this verse in another wrong way. He thinks that what Ibrāhīm (a.s.) wanted to see was how a dead body accepts life and becomes alive; that his question was concerned with the effect and the result, not with its reason and cause. His argument is as follows:

Ibrāhīm (a.s.) did not ask about any religiously essential matter. He only wanted to know how the dead become alive, so that he might have knowledge of it. It is not necessary for true belief to know ''how'' the dead are resurrected. Thus Ibrāhīm (a.s.) wanted to acquire some knowledge which was not necessary for true belief. This view is

supported by the mode of the question: ‘‘how?’’ This particle is used to ask about a state or condition. If you say ‘‘How does Zayd judge between people?’’, the fact that he does judge between people, is already known to you. What you want to know is only the condition under which, and the manner in which, he does this work. On the other hand, if you want to enquire about the fact of his judging, you would say ‘‘Does Zayd judge between people?’’ It proves that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) already knew and believed that Allāh gives life to the dead; he only wanted to know how it was done. Then why did Allāh tell him: ‘‘What! and do you not believe?’’ This question was asked to remove any possible misunderstanding about Ibrāhīm’s faith. The mode of questioning, used by Ibrāhīm, is mainly to ask about the state and condition. But it is also used, at times, to show the disability of the person so addressed. Someone claims that he can lift an extremely heavy weight, and you tell him: ‘‘Well, show me how you lift it’’. This question shows your conviction that he is unable to do so. As Allāh knew that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) had not meant any such thing in his question. He put this counter-question to him, so that he might clarify this point in unambiguous words, and might thus remove any misunderstanding that the wording of the first question could have caused. In this way, his prestine faith was clearly confirmed and no hearer could entertain any doubt about it. The words ‘‘but that my heart may be at ease’’ mean that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) wanted his heart not to wonder hither and thither thinking about various ways in which a dead body might become alive again. He wanted it to be at ease by seeing it with his own eyes. That his heart was not at ease before had no adverse effect on his faith in the power of Allāh to give life to the dead. And when he was shown how the dead were made alive, nothing was added to his already perfect faith. He just acquired some knowledge which was not very necessary for the faith.

Then, after a long discussion, he says: This verse shows the excellence of Ibrāhīm (a.s.). He was at once shown what he had asked for, and that, also, in the easiest way; while ‘Uzayr [1] was shown what he wanted to know after undergoing death for a hundred years.

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[1] ‘Uzayr = Ezra or Ezrah of the Apocrypha. He is known as Esdras in the Roman Catholic Bible.

The author's comments: Our previous explanation is enough to show that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) wanted to know how Allāh gives life to the dead and not as to how the dead accept life. He wanted to see the cause, not the effect. That is why he said, ''how Thou givest life to the dead'' (active voice); and did not say, ''how the dead are made alive'' (passive voice). Then there is the fact that the whole episode was made to happen through the activities of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) himself. If he had wanted to see only the effect (and not the cause), it would have been enough to show him any dead body coming alive, as was shown to the one who passed by a town when it had fallen upon its roofs; Allāh told him to ''look at the bones, how We assemble them together, then clothe them with flesh''. There would have been no need to make everything happen through the agency of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) himself. The trouble is that these people measure the spiritual condition of the prophets with the measure of their own common spirits, and in this way fail to understand how the prophets receive divine knowledge and how they perform miracles. They do not appreciate the difference between showing a prophet how the dead became alive and making him the active agent to give life to the dead: for them, both have the same significance! They have lost touch with divine realities, and fallen into this error. And the more they search for the truth, the farther they go from it. See how he interprets the ''ease of heart''. He says that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) wanted his heart not to wonder hither and thither thinking about the various ways in which a thing might be made alive. This alleged wondering hither and thither is a nonsense that is utterly impossible for a prophet like Ibrāhīm (a.s.).

Moreover, if Ibrāhīm (a.s.) had wanted to see how dead bodies come alive, the reply was not an answer to his query at all. He said, ''how Thou givest life to the dead ''. The word used in the question is *''al-mawtā''* (المَوْتي = the dead ones); it is plural and general. He might have meant the dead men, or the dead ones in general, including dead human beings and all types of animals. But Allāh showed him only the resurrection of four birds.

Then the said commentator has shown, according to his thinking, the superiority of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) over 'Uzayr (whom he identifies as the passer-by, mentioned in the preceding verse). He thinks that the two stories have the same significance; both men wanted to see how the dead were made alive and both were shown. But, as we have mentioned

earlier, neither story is concerned in any way with that question. And he has been unable to see the brilliant exposition and deep realities which the two verses contain.

Lastly, if the verse intended just to explain how the dead come alive, it would have been appropriate to end it on the adjective ‘‘Omnipotent’’, or ‘‘Powerful’’, and not on ‘‘Mighty, Wise’’. See, for instance, the following verses:

And among His signs is this, that you see the earth still, but when We send down on it the water, it stirs and swells: most surely He Who gives it life is the Giver of life to the dead; surely He has power over all things (41:39). As you see, the verse explains ‘‘how’’ the dead are given life, and it ends on the attribute of Omnipotence.

Have they not seen that Allāh, Who created the heavens and the earth and was not tired by their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Aye! He has surely power over all things (46:33). Here again the ‘‘how’’ is explained through a simile, and the verse ends on the attribute of power.

QUR’ĀN: *He said: ‘‘What! and do you not believe?’’ He said: ‘‘Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease’’: ‘‘Balā’’* (بَلي = certainly) is used to negate a negative question; and thus the negative of the question becomes positive. For example, Allāh asked the souls: *‘‘Am I not your Lord?’’ They said: ‘‘Certainly’’* (7:172). Had they replied, *na‘am* (نَعَمْ = yes), it would have become infidelity. *at-Ṭamānīnah* (الطَّمَانِيْنَةُ) and *al-iṭmīnān* (الاِطْمِيْنَانُ) is the quiet of the heart after its being troubled and agitated. It is derived from the words, *iṭma’annati ’l-arḍ* (اِطْمَأَنَّتِ الاَرْضُ = the earth was depressed) and *arḍun muṭma’innah* (اَرْضٌ مُطْمَئِنَّةٌ = low land) which are used when the earth becomes low, so that if the water comes in, it stays therein and if a stone falls in, it remains motionless.

Allāh said: ‘‘and do you not believe?’’ Had He said, ‘do you not believe?’, it would have shown that the original question (*‘‘Show me how Thou givest life to the dead’’*) was asked because of disbelief; and it would have become an admonition and reproach. By adding ‘‘and’’, Allāh showed that Ibrāhīm’s question was quite in order, but it should not be associated with disbelief in resurrection. *‘‘wa’’* (وَ = and) is a conjunctive and it joins two words, phrases or sentences. When Allāh added it in His question, it changed the import of the sentence. Now it means: Your question is in order, but it is associated with disbelief in

resurrection? Without this conjunctive, it would have meant: Do you ask it because you do not believe? It would have turned it into a censure and reprimand.

''Belief'' mentioned in the divine question is general, it is not used with any condition or restriction. It signifies that one cannot believe in Allāh if one is doubtful about the resurrection of the dead. No doubt the question ''and do you not believe?'' was asked in the context of giving life to the dead. But the context does not restrict the general meaning of the word. ''Belief'', therefore, retains its unconditional meaning, and shows that nobody could be a believer unless he believed in resurrection.

Likewise, the words of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) quoted by Allāh ''that my heart may be at ease'' are unconditional. It means that he wanted to acquire total tranquillity and to cut at the roots of all types of fancies and imaginations. Human imagination is bound to the senses; all its activities are confined within the circle of the things perceived by these senses. It shrinks from those things which are known through reason only, even when a man believes them to be true, like those principles of metaphysics which are beyond the sphere of matter and which cannot be known through any of the five senses. The mind resists those realities even when their premises are sound and certain. There always remain some vague doubt about the authenticity of those conclusions. Such doubts and conflicting ideas become stengthened by inclinations and desires, although the spirit firmly accepts the truth of those principles and believes in them unconditionally. Thus, belief and faith should remain firm and intact ; the imagination should only harm it by a slight distress, which we may call pricks. A man sleeps in a dark room in which is placed a dead body. He knows that the dead person is just a lump of matter without any sense or will; it cannot harm anybody in any way. But the imagination refuses to accept this truth, it goes on thinking fantastic things concerning that dead body; and it frightens the man to such an extent that it may happen that he loses the balance of his mind, or even dies because of terror.

This example shows that the existence of some thoughts or fantasies conflicting with the sure truths, is not always contrary to faith and belief. But surely it annoys the spirit and robs it of its tranquillity and ease. Such an imaginary distress cannot be removed except by demonstration or sensual perception. That is what is meant

by the saying: Seeing has an effect which knowledge does not have. For instance, Allāh informed Mūsā (a.s.), when he was at his appointed place, that his people had gone astray and were worshipping a calf. Hearing it, he believed it. Yet, his distress and anger showed itself only when he returned to them and saw them with his own eyes, in their idolatory. Then his violent grief reached its highest point; he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head dragging him towards himself.

From this and the previous explanations it is clear that Ibrāhīm (a.s.) had not asked to see a phenomenon which could be perceived through the senses; that is, he did not want to see how the parts and pieces of a dead body accept life after death. He wanted to see the action of Allāh in giving life to the dead. But this action could not be seen, although it was not unrelated to a perceived phenomenon, that is, the acceptance of life by the pieces of the dead bodies. Thus Ibrāhīm (a.s.) had in fact asked for an evident truth and certainty.

QUR'ĀN: *He said: ''Then take four of the birds, then cut them* (into pieces), *then place on every mountain a part of them, they will come to you'':* The word *''ṣurhunna''* (صُرْهُنَّ = cut them into pieces) is derived from *ṣāra; yaṣūru* (صَارَ، يَصُوْرُ = he cut / he inclined; he is cutting/he is inclining). Another recitation is *ṣirhunna* (صِرْهُنَّ), derived from *ṣāra; yaṣīru* (.صَارَ، يَصِيْرُ.) with the same meanings. The context shows that it means ''cut them''. The preposition, *''ilā''* (اِلي = to) gives a hint of inclination, as was explained earlier. The meaning, then, will be: cut them (into pieces), inclining them towards you; or, incline them towards you cutting them into pieces.

Anyhow, the above sentences are the answer to the prayer of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) when he said: ''My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead.'' Obviously, the answer should fit the question. The norms of eloquence and the wisdom of the speaker leave no room for verbosity; a wise and eloquent speaker does not allow his speech to be encumbered by unnecessary words which have no bearing on the intended meaning. This is especially so with the Qur'ān, the best speech, revealed by the best of speakers to the best of hearers. The story is not as simple as it appears at first glance. Had it been so, the answer would have been completed by the giving of life to any dead body in any manner, and the extra details would have been deemed unnecessary. But the facts tell us

otherwise: Allāh included in it many extra particulars and details. It was decided that the dead to be given life should be from among the birds; they should be alive, should be four in number, they should be killed and their parts and pieces be mixed together, then the mixed matter should be divided into many portions; then every portion should be placed in places distant from each other like the peak of this mountain and summit of that hill; then they should be given life through Ibrāhīm (a.s.), that is, the very man who had asked for it ; and thus they should all gather around him alive and none the worse for their experience.

All these details and peculiarities must have had some connection with the aim of the story. The commentators have written many reasons for these points, which only add to the readers' confusion (as may be seen in the more extensive books of exegesis of the Qur'ān).

However, these particulars must have been related to the question. We fmd that there are two aspects in the question of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) which require special attention:

First: His use of the active voice, ‘‘how Thou givest life’’. He wanted to see the giving of life, in-as-much as it is an attribute of Allāh. He did not want to see it from the other side, that is, how the various parts of a dead body accept life after death.

Second: His use of the plural, ‘‘dead ones’’, which is an added particular.

Keeping these two matters in view, we fmd that the answer fits the question perfectly, there is nothing unnecessary or extraneous in it.

The first aspect was fully answered by making it happen through Ibrāhīm (a.s.) himself. The words ‘‘then take’’, ‘‘then cut them’’ and ‘‘then place’’, were all essential for this purpose. Finally Allāh said, ‘‘then call them, they will come to you flying’’. Their coming to Ibrāhīm flying, that is, their life, was caused by Ibrāhīm's call. Allāh made his call the cause of the giving of life to the dead birds — and there is no bestowing of life except by the decree of Allāh. The call of Ibrāhīm, by order of Allāh, had a sort of connection with the decree of Allāh which gives life to all. In this way, Ibrāhīm saw this bestowing with his own eyes, and saw how the divine decree creates life. Had the call of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) not been connected with the decree of Allāh (*Who, when He intends a thing, say to it ‘‘Be', and it is*), and had it been connected, like our own talk, with the images in his mind only, it could not create

anything, could not give life to any dead thing.

The second aspect, the use of the plural, ''dead ones'', shows that the multiplicity of the dead had some bearing on the question. The bodies, after they had died, their components disintegrated, their shapes altered and their conditions totally changed, could not be recognized, nor could there remain any connection or attachment between their former parts; they became lost in the darkness of nothingness, like forgotten myths that exist neither in reality nor in the imagination. Ibrāhīm (a.s.) wanted to see how the life-giving power of Allāh would encompass them when there was nothing to be encompassed.

This same question was asked arrogantly by Pharaoh, and Mūsā (a.s.) replied to him by knowledge. Allāh says quoting this talk: (Pharaoh) *said: ''Then what is the state of the. former generation?'' He* (Mūsā) *said: ''The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book; errs not my Lord, nor does He forget''* (20: 51 — 52).

Anyhow, this aspect of the question was answered by Allāh when He ordered Ibrāhīm (a.s.) to take four of the birds (perhaps, the birds were chosen for this demonstration because it could be carried out on them easily and without delay) so that he might observe their ways, see their distinguishing features and particular shapes, and thus might know them perfectly. He was then ordered to kill them, chop and mince them, mixing their small particles completely together. Then he was required to divide that mixture into portions and put each portion on a separate mountain, so that there should not remain any chance of recognition. Then he was to call them, and they would come to him flying. By this demonstration, he would see that the re-establishing of separate identities and the bestowal of life follows the call; and that the call was addressed to their souls. The body follows the soul, it is not the other way round. The body is a dependant of the soul, and not vice versa. The body has the same relation to the soul that a shadow has to the body. The shadow appears when the body exists; it inclines according to the inclination of the body; and when the body ceases to exist, the shadow becomes extinct. Likewise, when Allāh creates a living thing, or gives life to a dead animal or man, the creative decree affects, originally, the spirit, and the material parts follow the spirit and come into being, because of the special bond created by Allāh between the spirit and its body — the bond which is preserved by Allāh and which we cannot comprehend. In this

way, the identity of the body follows the identity of the spirit, without any gap and without any hindrance. Allāh refers to it in His words, ‘‘they will come to you flying’’, that is, without any delay whatsoever.

The same principle has been enunciated in verse 32:10 — 11, *And they say: ‘‘What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?’’ Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: ‘‘The angel of death who is given charge of you causes you to die, then to your Lord you are brought back.’’* We have explained to some extent this verse while discussing the non-materiality of the soul; further details will be given in a proper place, God willing.

‘‘Then take four of the birds’’: He was given this order so that he might identify them perfectly. Thus there would be no room for doubt when they had been made whole and alive again. Also he would observe their particulars and peculiarities, and then would see how all distinctions had been lost after death.

‘‘Then cut them (into pieces), then place on every mountain a part of them’’: Kill them, cut them into pieces, mix those pieces all together and divide the portions on the mountains found in your locality. In this way, the parts of each bird would be scattered here and there, and they would not be recognizable.

This order indicate that this event occurred after Ibrāhīm (a.s.) had migrated from Babylonia to Syria; because there are no mountains in Babylonia.

‘‘Then call them’’: Call the birds ‘O peacock!, O this!, O that!’ The pronoun ‘‘them’’ refers to the ‘‘four birds’’. If Allāh had wished Ibrahim to call the pieces of the birds, He-would have said *‘‘nādihinna’’* (نَادِهِنَّ = cry out to them), because the pieces were on far away mountains, and not *ud‘uhunna* (أُدْعُهُنَّ = call them) which is used for calling someone nearby. The order to ‘‘call them’’ indicates that he was to call the birds (i.e., their spirits) themselves.

‘‘They will come to you flying ’’. That is, they will get their own bodies and shapes, and will acquire all their faculties and powers including flying.

QUR’ĀN: *And know that Allāh is Mighty, Wise:* He is Mighty; if a thing ceases to exist, it is not lost to Him. He is Wise; He does not do a thing but by its proper method. He creates bodies by creating souls, and

not the other way round.

TRADITIONS

About the words of Allāh: *Did you not see him who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord:* aṭ-Ṭayālisī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have narrated from ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib that he said: ‘‘He who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord was Namrūd (Nimrod), son of Kan‘ān.’’ (*ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*)

Abū ‘Alī aṭ-Ṭabrisī has said: ‘‘There is a difference of opinion as to the time when this dispute occurred. It is said that it was when he shattered the idols, before he was thrown into fire. (It is reported from Muqātil.) Also it is said that it was after he was thrown into fire, and it had became cool and safe for him. (It is reported from aṣ-Ṣādiq - a.s.)’’ (*Tafsīru ’l-burhān*)

The author says: The verse does not say when the dispute had taken place. But it may fairly be inferred that it was after Ibrāhīm had been thrown into fire. The stories written in the Qur’ān about the early period of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) — when he argued with his uncle and other people and then shattered the idols, give us to understand that he first met Namrūd when he was taken to his court accused of breaking their idols; and Namrūd ordered him to be burnt alive. At that time Namrūd was too busy in sentencing him to have any dialogue with him about his Lord: whether it was Allāh or Namrūd. Also, if this event had occurred at that time, Namrūd would have disputed with him on behalf of the idols, and not for establishing his own divinity.

There are many traditions, narrated by the Sunnī and the Shī‘ite narrators that the one ‘‘who passed by a town and it had fallen down upon its roofs’’ was the prophet, Armiah. Other traditions say that he was ‘Uzayr. But both types of traditions are ‘‘solitary’’, (i.e., not *mutawātir*) and one is not bound to accept any of them. Moreover, the chains of some are weak. The Qur’ān too is silent about the passer-by’s identity, and the Bible does not mention this story.

The story given in those traditions is long, and there are some differences among them. In any case, those traditions are beyond the scope of our book. Those wishing to read them should look for them into

other books.

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) told in a tradition about the words of Allāh: *And* (remember) *when Ibrāhīm said: ‘‘My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead . . . ’’:* ‘‘And this verse is allegorical; it means that he (Ibrāhīm - a.s.) asked about ‘how’?, and ‘how’ is an action of Allāh, Mighty and Great is He; (it is a thing that) if a knowledgeable person did not know it he cannot be faulted for it nor can any defect be attributed to his belief in monotheism . . .’’ (*Ma‘āni ’l-akhbar*)

The author says: The meaning of this tradition may be understood from our earlier explanations.

‘Alī ibn Asbāṭ says that Abu ’1-Ḥasan ar-Riḍā (a.s.) was asked about the words of Allāh: *He* (Ibrāhīm) *said: ‘‘Certainly! but that my heart may be at ease.’’* ‘‘Was there any doubt in his heart?’’ The Imām said: ‘‘No! but he wanted an increase (in it) from Allāh . . .’’ (*at-Tafsīr,* al-‘Ayyāshī)

The author says: This matter has been narrated in *al-Kāfī* from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) and al-‘Abdu ’s-Ṣāliḥ (a.s.). Its meaning has been explained earlier.

al-Qummī narrated from his father from Ibn Abī ‘Umayr from Abū Ayyūb from Abū Basīr from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) saying: ‘‘Verily Ibrāhīm saw a dead body on a river-bank; aquatic carnivores were eating it, then they attacked each other and some of them ate the others. Ibrāhīm was astonished (to see it) and said: *‘My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead.’* Allāh said: *‘What! and do you not believe?’ He said: ‘Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease.’* Allāh said: *‘Then take four of the birds, then cut them into pieces, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allāh is Mighty, Wise.’* Thereupon, Ibrāhīm took a peacock, a rooster, a pigeon and a crow. Then Allāh said: ‘Cut them into pieces and mix their flesh together and place them separately on ten mountains.’ Thereafter he (Ibrāhīm - a.s.) called them and said: ‘Be alive by the permission of Allāh.’ The birds began assembling, the flesh and bones of each joining together with its head; and they flew towards Ibrāhīm. (Seeing it) Ibrāhīm said: ‘Verily, Allāh is Mighty, Wise.’ ’’ (*at-Tafsīr*)

The author says: al-‘Ayyāshī has narrated it in his *at-Tafsīr* from Abū Baṣīr from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.); and it has been narrated through Sunnī

chains from Ibn ‘Abbās.

The words of the Imām: ‘‘Verily, Ibrāhīm saw a dead body . . . *‘My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead’ ’’,* describe the reason why Ibrāhīm asked this question: he had just seen the pieces of the body being disjoined and scattered, and their condition changed. He observed their dispersal in all directions and the deterioration in their condition which was to such an extent that nothing of the original body remained there.

Question: The tradition apparently says that the doubt was that which is known as the doubt of the eater and the eaten; because it mentions that the carnivores attacked each other and some of them ate the others, and that the wonder and question of Ibrāhīm (a.s.) was based on this phenomenon.

Comment: There are two doubts: 1) the scattering and dispersal of the parts of the bodies, the change in their properties and shapes, in short, their complete extinction so that apparently nothing remained to accept the life; 2) the parts of one animal become the parts of another animal; how could the two animals be resurrected whole? The part of one is also the part of another; whichever is resurrected whole, the other one will be incomplete. This is called the doubt of the eater and the eaten.

The answer given by Allāh — that the body follows the soul — is sufficient to remove both doubts. But what Ibrāhīm (a.s.) was ordered to do was not related to the doubt of the eater and the eaten; it was directly concerned with the first doubt — dispersal of the parts and total extinction, even though the basic answer removes both doubts.

What the tradition mentions some of the carnivores eating the others is not intended to be a part of the explanation of the verse.

The Imām (aṣ-Ṣādiq - a.s.) has said: ‘‘Thereupon, Ibrāhīm took a peacock, a rooster, a pigeon and a crow.’’ Some other traditions say that the birds were a vulture, a duck, a peacock and a rooster. It has been narrated by aṣ-Ṣādiq in *‘Uyūnu ’l-akhbār* from ar-Riḍā (a.s.). It has also been reported from Mujāhid, Ibn Jarīḥ, ‘Atā’ and Ibn Zayd. Still others say that it was a hoopoe, a sparrow-hawk, a peacock and a crow. It has been narrated by al-‘Ayyāshī, through Ma‘rūf ibn Kharabbūdh, from al-Bāqir (a.s.): and is reported from Ibn ‘Abbās too. Another Sunnī tradition quotes Ibn ‘Abbās as saying that the birds were a crested crane, a peacock, a rooster and a pigeon. There is only one name which appears in

every report: peacock.

The Imām said: ‘‘place them separately on ten mountains.’’ That the mountain were ten is unanimously mentioned in the traditions of the Imāms of *Ahlu ’l-bayt.* Somone has put their number as four; another as seven.

‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm said: ‘‘I was present in the court of al-Ma’mūn and with him was ar-Riḍā (‘Alī ibn Mūsā). al-Ma’mūn said to him: ‘O Son of the Messenger of Allāh! Is it not your belief that the prophets were sinless?’ He said: ‘Certainly.’ Then he (al-Ma’mūn) asked him (ar-Ridā - a.s.) about some verses of the Qur’ān, and said to him, among others: ‘Now tell me about the words of Allāh: *‘‘My Lord! show me how Thou givest life to the dead. ’’He said: ‘‘What! and do you not believe?’’ He said: ‘‘Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease.’’* ar-Riḍā said: ‘Verily Allāh, Blessed and High is He!, had revealed to Ibrāhīm: ‘‘I am going to take from my servants a friend; if he asks me to give life to the dead, I will grant his prayer.’’ It came into the heart of Ibrāhīm that he was that friend. Therefore, he said: *‘‘My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead. ’’Allāh said:, ‘‘What ! and do you not believe?’’* Ibrāhīm said: *‘‘Certainly, but that my heart may be at ease* about Thy friendship . . .’’ ’ ’’ (*‘Uyūn ’l-akhbār*)

The author says: We have expressed our views (while discussing about the Garden of Adam) about ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm and about this tradition which he has narrated from ar-Riḍā (a.s.).

However, this tradition throws some light on the fact that the status of the friendship of Allāh brings with it the granting of prayers. The language supports this too. *al-Khallah* (الخَلَّةُ) means ‘need’. The friend is called *al-khalīl* (الخَلِيْلُ) because when friendship is perfect, one friend describes his needs to the other friend — and why should one describe his need if his friend cannot fulfil it?

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ
فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِأَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ - ٢٦١ .
الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ ثُمَّ لاَ يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلاَ أَذًى لَهُمْ
أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَهُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ - ٢٦٢ . قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ
وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَا أَذًى وَاللهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ - ٢٦٣. يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
لاَ تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلاَ يُؤْمِنُ
بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ
صَلْداً لاَ يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ - ٢٦٤ .
وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِبْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللهِ وَتَثْبِيتاً مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ
جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ
وَاللهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ - ٢٦٥ . أَيَوَدُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِنْ نَخِيلٍ
وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ
ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاءُ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ - ٢٦٦ . يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ
وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلاَ تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ
بِآخِذِيهِ إِلاَّ أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ - ٢٦٧ . الشَّيْطَانُ

يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللهُ يَعِدُكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلاً وَاللهُ
وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ـ ٢٦٨. يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْراً
كَثِيراً وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ ـ ٢٦٩ . وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ نَفَقَةٍ أَوْ
نَذَرْتُمْ مِنْ نَذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللهَ يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ـ ٢٧٠ . إِنْ تُبْدُوا
الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ
عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ـ ٢٧١ . لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ
وَلَكِنَّ اللهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا
ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ـ ٢٧٢.
لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْباً فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ
الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافاً وَمَا
تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ـ ٢٧٣ . الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ
وَالنَّهَارِ سِرّاً وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ ـ ٢٧٤ .

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains; and Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allāh is Ample-giving, All-knowing (261). *Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve* (262). *A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury; and Allāh is Self-sufficient, Forbearing* (263). *O you who believe! do not nullify your charity by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men and does not believe in Allāh and the last day. So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with* (some) *earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it just a bare stone. They shall not gain anything of what they have*

earned. And Allāh does not guide the unbelieving people (264). *And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allāh and keeping firm their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls so it brings forth its fruit twofold; but if heavy rain does not fall upon it, then light rain* (is enough). *And Allāh sees what you do* (265). *Would anyone of you like that he should have a garden of palms and vines with streams flowing beneath it; he has in it all kinds of fruits; and old age has overtaken him and he has weak offspring, when* (lo!) *a whirlwind with fire in it smites it so it gets burnt up. Thus Allāh makes the signs clear to you, that you may reflect* (266). *0 you who believe! spend* (benevolently) *out of the good things that you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it, that you may spend* (in charity), *while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it; and know that Allāh is Self-sufficient, Praiseworth* (267). *Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination; and Allāh promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allāh is Ample-giving, All-knowing* (268). *He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good; and none but men of understanding mind* (269). *And whatever alms you give or* (whatever) *vow you vow, surely Allāh knows it, and the oppressors shall have no helpers* (270). *If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to poor, it is better for you; and this will remove from you some of your sins; and Allāh is aware of what you do* (271). *To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allāh guides aright whom He pleases; and whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good, and you do not spend but to seek Allāh's pleasure, and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged* (272). (Charity is) *for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allāh — they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks them to be rich on account of their self-control* (from begging) ; *thou wouldst recognize them by their countenance; they do not beg from men importunately; and whatever good thing you*

spend, surely Allāh knows it (273). *Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve* (274).

* * * * *

GENERAL COMMENT

The context of the verses indicates that they must have been revealed all together. Their theme is spending in the way of Allāh. They begin with a parable to show that charity increases in the hands of Allāh, one to seven hundred or even more, by the permission of Allāh. Another parable shows that this increase is sure to happen; it cannot fail. They go to forbid insincerity in spending, that is, spending to show others how generous one is, and give one more parable to demonstrate the futility of this, that such spending does not increase and bears no fruit. Also, they admonish the believers not to follow charity with reproach and injury, because these two evils nullify alms and make their reward forfeit. Then they say that spending should be from their good and lawful wealth, and not from unlawful or worthless things, as it shows niggardliness and miserliness. Thereafter they prescribe who should be given charity — the poor men who are besieged in the way of Allāh. Finally it again reminds them of the great reward of charity which they shall find with Allāh.

In short, the verses exhort the believers to spend and explain to them the following things:

First: The purpose of spending: It should be to seek the pleasure of Allāh, not to show off to people.

Second: The fashion and condition of this good work: It should not be followed by reproach and injury.

Third: The quality of the wealth to be spent: It must be lawful and good, not unlawful or worthless.

Fourth: The qualification of the receivers: It should be given to those poor who are besieged in the way of Allāh.

Fifth: The rewards of such spending in this world and in the next.

SPENDING IN THE WAY OF ALLĀH

One of the two pillars of Islam is the Rights of the people; and spending for the welfare of the people is one of the things to which Islam pays the utmost attention. It exhorts a believer to spend for this purpose, and has laid down the rules and opened up the ways for such spending — some of these ways are obligatory and others highly recommended: *zakāt, khums* (the one-fifth tax), penalties to expiate certain illegalities, various types of redemption, obligatory spending and recommended charities. Then there are laws to establish and regulate endowments, settlements for residence, or for life, wills, gifts and many similar things.

All this has been done to improve the living standars of the poor classes — the people who cannot meet their expenses without help from others. The intention of Islam is to raise their level to bring them nearer to the people of means.

On the other hand, it has strictly forbidden the rich people from pompous living and showing off their wealth. It has allowed them to live in a reasonable and honourable manner; but has prohibited extravagance and the squandering of wealth in a lavish style which is above the reach of the average person.

The aim of both sets of rules was to create a community life that would be neither too low nor too high, whose various groups would be nearer to each other, and would have a fairly uniform standard of life. Such a society would give life to the institution of unity and co-operation; and would eradicate conflicting designs and uproot enmity and antagonism. The Qur'ān holds that the true religion must organize life in all its multifarious activities, putting it in order in such a way that man's bliss is guaranteed in this life as well as in the next one. Such a religion will bless man with true knowledge, noble character and pleasant life; he will be free in this life to enjoy the bounties given to him by Allāh, and to remove from himslef unpleasant things and all types of misfortune.

This will be possible only when society enjoys a good life and all its members share its bliss equally or almost equally. This, in its turn, demands that all their needs are fulfilled and the condition of society reformed. All this needs money and wealth. The way to get that money for this most important purpose is by contributions from the members of society — they are required to spend out of what they have earned by

their labour. Surely the believers are brothers to each other; and the earth is of Allāh, and property and wealth belong to Him.

This is a fact, the truth of which was demonstrated by the Prophet during his lifetime when he had the authority in his hands. He showed its correctness and' demonstrated how it created a stable society, growing, developing and bearing good results.

It was this society for which the Leader of the faithfuls, ‘Alī (a.s.) felt nostalgia, and the passing away of which he remembered sorrowfully, in one of his speeches:

‘‘You live in a period when the steps of virtue are moving backwards, and the steps of evil are moving forward; and Satan is increasing his eagerness to ruin people. This is the time when his equipment is strong, and his traps have been widely spread and his prey has become easy (to catch). Cast your glance wherever you like. Do you see (anything) except a poor man suffering (the pangs of) poverty, or a rich man changing Allāh’s favour for ungratefulness, or a miser trampling the right of Allāh to increase his wealth, or an arrogant person (who behaves) as though his ears hear any counsel with difficulty.’’ (*Nahju ’l-balāghah,* Sermon 129).

The passage of time has proved the validity of this Qur’ānic system — that the various classes should be brought together, the poor should be helped through ‘‘spending’’, and the rich forbidden extravagance, pomposity and vanity. When western culture took the upper hand, people’s ideals and outlook changed. They clung to the earthly life, tried their utmost to acquire and keep all worldly trinkets coveted by animal greed and sensual desires, and adopted for it whatever means they could. The result: wealth was confined within a limited circle, the pleasures of life were reserved for a wealthy minority, and the only share of the lower class in it was deprivation. The upper classes continued to swallow each other like cannibals, until a very select group monopolized the blessings and bliss of this life and the vast majority, that is, the common people, were denied even the right of life.

This behaviour generated all evil tendencies on both sides; it gave rise to the saying, ‘‘Every man for himself’’. No one leaves anything nor does he spare anything. It has resulted in a class struggle, and open enmity between the two groups, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, each side wanting to exterminate the other. This was the basic cause of the

World Wars and the emergence of Communism. Truth and nobility have been cast aside, peace of mind and tranquillity of heart have departed from the world, and the human species on the whole does not have any feeling of joy in life. This is the position which the chaos of human society has reached today — what tomorrow holds is more grievous and horrible.

One of the most damaging factors in this social disorder is the closure of the gate ‘‘spending’’, and the opening of the doors of interest. Allāh has explained the evil of this in seven verses coming after these verses of ‘‘spending’’; Allāh had warned the mankind that if interest becomes widespread, the world will fall in disorder. It is one of the prophecies of the Qur’ān which has been fulfilled in these days. When the Qur’ān was revealed, interest was a foetus; now it has been born from the womb of western economy and is growing by leaps and bounds.

To understand what we have just mentioned, read the following verses: *Then set your face uprightly for the* (right) *religion in natural devotion* (to the truth) ; *the nature made by Allāh in which He has made men; there is no alteration in the creation of Allāh; that is the right religion, but most people do not know — turning to Him. And be careful of* (your duty to) *Him, and keep up prayer and be not of the polytheists, of those who, divided their religion and became sects, every sect rejoicing in what they have with them. And when harm afflicts men, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him; then when He makes them taste of mercy from Him, lo! some of them begin to associate* (others) *with their Lord, so as to be ungrateful for what We have given them; but enjoy yourselves* (for a while), *for you shall soon come to know . . . So give to the near of kin his due, and to the needy and the wayfarer; this is the best for those who desire Allāh’s pleasure, and these it is who are successful. And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the property of men, it shall not increase with Allāh; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allāh’s pleasure — it is these* (persons) *that shall get manifold . . . Disorder has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return. Say: ‘‘Travel in the land, then see how was the end of those* (who were) *before* (you); *most of them were polytheists.’’ Then set thy face upright to the right religion before there comes from Allāh the day which cannot be averted; on that day they shall become separated* (30:30 — 43). There are verses

of the same import in the chapters of Hūd, Yūnus, the Night journey, the Prophets etc. We shall explain them later on.

This is apparently the reason why these verses of spending exhort the believers and give so much emphasis to ‘‘spending’’.

COMMENTARY

QUR’ĀN: *The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh is as the parable of a grain . . .:* ‘‘The way of Allāh’’ means anything which leads to the pleasure of Allāh; any religious purpose for which work is done. The phrase in the verse is unconditional, although it comes after the verses of ‘‘fighting in the way of Allāh’’, and although the phrase ‘‘in the way of Allāh’’ is combined in many verses with fighting. But such recurring usage does not restrict the phrase to fighting.

Some scholars have said: The words, ‘‘as the parable of a grain growing seven ears . . .’’ actually mean, ‘‘as the parable of him who sowed a grain that grew seven ears . . .’’ The ‘‘grain growing seven ears’’ is the parable of property spent in the way of Allāh, and not ‘‘of those who spend’’ that wealth. And it does not need much explanation.

This interpretation, although sound in itself, is not in total conformity with the Qur’ān. On deep contemplation, we find that an overwhelming number of the Qur’ānic parables are of this same style. See, for example, the following verses:

And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who shouts to that which hears not but a call and a cry . . . (2:171). As we see, it is the parable of him who calls the disbelievers, not of the disbelievers themselves.

The likeness of this world’s life is only as water which We sent down from the sky; by its mingling, the herbage of the earth which men and cattle eat grows; un.til when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished, and its people think that they have power over it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day, so We render it as reaped, as though it had not been in existence yesterday; thus do We make clear the signs fora people who reflect (10:24).

. . . the parable of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp . . . (24:35).

Look also at other parables mentioned in these very verses:

So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock . . . And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allāh and keeping firm their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground . . .

There are many such verses and all of them have one thing in common — all restrict themselves to the main element of the likeness, the essential ingradient of the parable; and omit other factors for the sake of brevity.

A parable is an actual or imagined story which has a marked resemblance to the subject matter in some aspects; it creates a picture in the mind which helps to fully grasp the idea for which the parable has been used. For example, there are the Arabic proverbs, ''I have neither she-camel nor he-camel''; and, ''In summer you wasted the milk''. These sayings remind the hearer of the related true stories by fitting the story to the topic at hand, and at once the picture flashes before his mind's eyes in clear perspective. That is why it is said that proverbs do not change.

Another example: ''The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh is as the parable of the one who sows a grain, it growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains.'' This is an imaginary story.

The basic element of a parable — the essential ingredient of the similarity that produces the clear and well-defined image of the topic — is sometimes the whole story; and occasionally a part of the story. Examples of the former are:

And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability (14:26).

The similitude of those who were placed under the Torah, then they did not hold it, is as the similitude of the donkey bearing books (62:5).

The example of the latter, where the basic element is only a part of the story, is this parable under discussion — spending in the way of Allāh has been likened to the grain growing seven ears, every ear having a hundred grains. This is the basic element of analogy; but in explaining it we earlier added the words, ''of him who sows''; it was added just to complete the story.

In the Qur'ānic parables, where the basic element of the analogy is the whole story, Allāh has mentioned it without any omission. But where that element is only a part of the story, only that part has been described and others have been left out. Why should the full story have to be described when the purpose of the parable is fully served by the short version. Moreover, this style creates alacrity in the hearer's minds — they do not find what they anticipate and an unexpected picture is flashed before their minds' eyes. But it fully serves the purpose: it is different from the anticipated picture and yet it is the same. This is brevity through alteration in its finest way; and the Qur'ān uses it whenever necessary.

QUR'ĀN: *Growing seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains: ''as-Sunbul''* (السُّنْبُلُ = ear of corn, spike) is on paradigm of *fun'ul* (فُنْعُلُ). It is said that its root meaning is to draw a curtain. The ear of corn was given this name because it hides the grains in their husks.

A most foolish objection has been levelled against this verse, that it is a simile of a thing which is not found in the world — no ear contains a hundred grains.

Reply: It is not necessary for a similitude that the picture compared with be found outside the imagination. Analogies with imaginary ideas and images are found by their thousands in every language.

Moreover, ears containing a hundred grains, and a single seed yielding seven hundred grains are very often found in many places.

QUR'ĀN: *And Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allāh is Ample-giving, All-knowing:* Allāh gives more than seven hundred to whom He pleases: He is Ample-giving; no one can put any hindrance on His generosity; nor can anyone restrict His grace. Allāh says: *Who is it that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold* (2:245). In this verse, ''manifold'' is unrestricted; there is no numerical limit to it.

Someone has said: This sentence means, ''Allāh increases this much, that is, seven hundred for one, for whom He pleases.'' According to this interpretation seven hundred would be the limit of multiplication.

But if we accept this interpretation as correct, then this sentence would show the cause of the previous statement (. . . *seven ears, in every ear there are a hundred grains*). In that case, it should have begun with the word *inna* (إنَّ = verily, surely, indeed). See for example another verse, where the causative sentence begins with the word ''surely'':

Allāh is He Who made for you the night that you may rest therein and the day to see; most surely Allāh is Gracious to men (40:61). There are many verses in the same style.

The seven-hundred-fold reward is unrestricted — it is not restricted to the Hereafter. The promise is as valid for this world as it is for the Hereafter.

And on reflection, one has to support this idea. You spend your property in the way of Allāh; you may be thinking at first that you have lost that property without getting anything in exchange. But if you ponder a little on this matter you will appreciate that mankind is like one living body; it has various limbs and organs, all of different shapes and with distinctive names, but all of them are united in the goal of life, all are joined together in each other's effects and benefits. If one of these limbs loses its health, becomes weak or falters in its function, the whole body is adversely affected and fails to reach its goal. The eyes and the hands are two organs with different names and separate functions. But man has been given his eyes so that he may distinguish objects from each other through light, colour and distance. When this task is accomplished, the hands come into action to take hold of what man should acquire for himself, and to repulse what should be repulsed. If the hands fail in their function, man has to make up the loss through other limbs; but, to begin with, it creates untold misery and hardship for him, and also decreases the normal functions of those limbs to the extent they are used as substitutes for the hands. But if other limbs were to send to the ailing hands some of the blood cells and energy from their own stock and the hands to become restored to health, the whole body would grow better and every limb would share in the benefits — the benefits which may be hundreds and thousands times more than the small amount of blood, etc., which it expended for the hands.

Likewise, when a man spends for the betterment of the condition of another, it saves the beneficiary from evils which are generally caused by poverty; he feels love for the benefactor in his heart, his tongue speaks his name with respect; and he busies himself in his work with more vigour and energy and thus prospers. The whole of society feels its good effects, and as a member of that society, the benefactor also shares in that social upliftment. This is more evident when the spending is done for social services like education, training, etc. This much about general

spending.

When that spending is done in the way of Allāh, seeking His pleasure, the increase is sure to occur without fail. If wealth is spent, but not for the pleasure of Allāh, then it is done for selfish aims — the rich man spends on a poor man to avert his evils from himself. Or he thinks that if the poor man becomes self-supporting, the whole of society will become a better place to live in, and in this way the benefactor will live in it more happily. This type of spending is a sort of subjugation of the poor who is exploited by the rich for selfish purposes. Such a charity creates bad effects in the poor. Sometimes these hard feelings accumulate and then burst out in riots and revoultions.

But the spending which is done only for the pleasure of Allāh is free from these defects; it creates only good, and only bliss and blessings result from it.

QUR'ĀN: *Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve:*

''al-Itbā' '' (الاتْبَاعُ) is used with both transitive and intransitive meanings. It means 'to follow' and 'to persue' ; and 'to attach one thing to other'. This word has been used in these two meanings in the verses: *Then they persued them at sunrise* (26:60); *And We attached to them a curse in this world*... (28:42).

''al-Mann'' (المَنُّ) means to say what may turn charity into annoyance, for example, to tell the beneficiary: ''I gave you this and that''. The root-meaning of this word, as has been said, is ''to cut''. The word has been used in this meaning in the verse: . . . *for them surely is a reward never to be cut off* (41:8).

''al-Adhā'' (الأذي) is immediate harm, a little injury. *''al-Khawf''* (الخَوْفُ = fear) is the expectation of harm or trouble. *''al-Ḥuzn''* (الحُزْنُ = grief) is the sorrow which greatly disturbs the soul, and which is caused by a real or almost real misfortune.

QUR'ĀN: *A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. . .:* ''Kind word'' is that which is not disliked by the common man. It may vary according to circumstances. *''al-Maghfirah''* (المَغْفِرَةُ = forgiveness) literally means to cover. *''al-Ghinā''* (الغِنى = self-sufficiency) is the opposite of need and poverty. *''al-Ḥilm''* (الحِلْمُ = forbearance) means to remain silent when confronted with disagreeable

words or actions.

The contrast between a kind word and forgiveness, on the one hand, and charity followed by injury, on the other, shows that the ‘‘kind word’’ means that if one wants to turn away a suppliant without fulfilling his need and the suppliant has not uttured unpleasant words, one should express one’s good wishes and utter good words to him. The ‘‘forgiveness’’ refers to the same situation, provided the suppliant has said unpleasant things about the intended benefactor. In both cases, if one uses a kind word and forgives the suppliant it is far better than fulfilling his need and then following it with reproach and injury. Such reproach, in fact, shows that the benefactor thinks that what he has spent is a great wealth, and that he is annoyed with the people’s requests and supplications. But a believer should be far above such moral defects and petty thoughts. The believer must mould himself on the attributes of Allāh. And Allāh is Self-sufficient: no bounty is great in His eyes; He gives and bestows whatever He wishes. Also He is Forbearing: He makes no haste in meting out punishment to evil-doers; He does not become angry on His creatures’ follies. It was to point out this important matter that the verse ended the sentence, ‘‘and Allāh is Self-sufficient, Forbearing’’.

QUR’ĀN: *O you who believe! do not nullify your charity by reproach and injury:* The verse proves that charity becomes forfeited if it is followed by reproach and injury.

Some people say that this verse shows that subsequent sins (and especially big ones) nullify the good deeds preceding them. But this inference is uncalled for. The verse .only talks about reproach and injury *vis-a-vis* charity.

The topic of forfeiture has already been explained in detail.

QUR’ĀN: *Like him who spends his wealth to be seen of men and does not believe in Allāh and the last day:* As the verse is addressed to the believers, and as one who does a good deed to show to men is not a believer (because he does not do that deed for the sake of Allāh) the prohibition was not extended to showiness; it was confined to reproach and injury, because there is no danger of showiness for a believer. The verse likens the almsgiver who follows his alms with reproach and injury to the one who spends to show off to men; and the likeness is in the forfeiture of charities, although there is a difference between both. The

charity of one who spent to show off to men was null and void *ab initio;* while that of the one who followed it with reproach and injury was correct and valid to begin with, but was later nullified because of these sins.

The verb ''does not believe'' has the same form and tense as the preceding one, ''spends''; it does not say ''did not believe''. This similarity of tense shows that the disbelief here implies the showing person's disbelief in the divine call of spending and in His promise of its great reward. Had he believed in the divine call to the believers to spend in His way, and also in the last day when the promised reward would be given, he would have done his good deed to seek the pleasure of Allāh and would have longed for the reward of the last day, instead of doing it to be seen by men.

It shows that disbelief here does not imply that the showy person does not believe in Allāh at all.

Also it proves that doing a deed with the intention of showing off to men implies that such a doer has no faith in Allāh and the last day, in so far as that deed is concerned.

QUR'ĀN: *So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock . . . does not guide the unbelieving people:* The pronoun, ''his'' refers to ''him who spends his wealth to be seen of men''; the parable is for him. *''aṣ-Ṣafwān''* (الصَّفْوَانُ) and *''aṣ-ṣafā''* (الصَّفَا) are smooth rock. The same is the meaning of *''aṣ-ṣald''* (الصَّلْدُ).

''al-Wābil'' (الوَابِلُ) is heavy rain, descending with force. The pronoun in ''They shall not gain '' refers to ''him who spends to be seen of men'', because ''him'' stands for the whole group of showy persons. The sentence ''They shall not gain anything of what they have earned'' describes the reason for the analogy; and it is the common factor of the two sides of this simile. The sentence ''And Allāh does not guide the unbelieving people'' describes the general principle: a man who does a deed to show to people is in that particular respect an unbeliever, and Allāh does not guide such people. This sentence, therefore, gives the reason for the forfeiture mentioned in this verse.

The man who spends to show off to people can get no reward for such spending. Look at a smooth rock, upon which is some earth, then a heavy rain falls upon it. Now, rain, and especially a heavy downpour, is the apparent cause of the earth coming to life again; it makes it green and

adorns it with plants. But if earth settles on a smooth rock it cannot remain in place in a heavy rainfall; it is washed away and the bare rock is left there for everyone to see — the rock which cannot absorb water, nor can it nourish a seed to grow. Rain and earth both together are the most important causes of plant life and growth; but as their place was a smooth rock their effect was totally nullified, although none can attribute any fault or defect to these two life-giving ingredients.

Thus is the case of the man who does a good deed but not with intention of seeking the pleasure of Allāh; his action becomes totally null and void, even when the deed, for example, spending in the way of Allāh, is among the most effective causes of getting divine reward. But the heart of such a man is like that smooth rock; it is unable to receive divine mercy and grace. And thus he gets nothing of what he had earned.

The verse shows that the acceptance of a deed depends on sincere intention and on the pure aim of seeking the pleasure of Allāh. Sunnīs and Shī'ahs have narrated from the Prophet that he said: ''Verily, deeds are according to intentions''.

QUR'ĀN: *And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking the pleasure of Allāh and keeping firm their souls:* ''Seeking the pleasure of Allāh'' means doing what Allāh has ordered His servant to do. When the master gives an order to his servant and the servant complies with that order, the master faces him, pleased with him, Likewise, Allāh orders His servant concerning certain things and when the servant obeys His command Allāh turns towards him with pleasure and mercy.

The phrase ''and keeping firm their souls'' has been interpreted in various ways:

a) It means ''certitude and confirmation''.

b) *''at-Tathbīt''* (اَلتَّثْبِيْتُ = to keep firm) means *at-tathabbut* (اَلتَّثَبُّتُ = to make sure). The phrase means that they want to make sure where they spend their wealth.

c) It means to make sure how they spend: if it is for the pleasure of Allāh, they spend it; if there is any shade of impurity in intention, for example, and eargerness to be seen by men, they desist from spending.

d) It means keeping the souls firm in obedience to Allāh.

e) It means establishing the soul firmly in faith by making it accustomed to spending property for the sake of Allāh.

Obviously, these interpretations do not fit the verse unless one is prepared to stretch the meaning of the word ‘‘keeping firm’’ beyond its linguistic limit. Probably a more appropriate interpretation (and Allāh knows better!) may be as follows:

Allāh, first, unconditionally praised spending in His way, and mentioned that it had a very great reward in the presence of Allāh. Then He excluded two kinds of spending, because Allāh is not pleased with them and no reward will be given for them: 1) spending to show off to people, and such a deed is null and void *ab inition;* 2) spending that is followed by reproach and injury, for although such a deed is valid initially, it becomes nullified because of the subsequent sins of reproach and injury.

In these cases the deed is nullified, either because the doer does not seek the pleasure of Allāh from the very beginning (as in the first case) or because his soul changes the initial correct intention and seeks wordly satisfaction through reproach and injury (as in the second case).

Now Allāh describes the condition of His good servants who spend purely for His sake. These are they who spend to seek the pleasure of Allāh and then ‘‘keep firm their souls’’ on this pure intention without following it with bad deeds which could nullify it.

In short, ‘‘seeking the pleasure of Allāh’’ neans that the doer of a good deed should not contaminate his intention with showiness or other such things which would indicate that his action is for other than Allāh. And ‘‘keeping firm their souls’’ means that he should fix his soul firmly in that pure and uncontaminated intention.

This ‘‘keeping firm’’ is done by the soul on the soul. Grammatically, *‘‘tathbītan’’* (تَثْبِيْتاً = keeping firm) is *‘‘at-tamyīz’’* (التَّمِيْزُ = accusative of specification); *‘‘min’’* (مِنْ = from) shows origination; *‘‘anfusihim’’* (اَنْفُسِهِمْ = their souls) is the subject ‘‘from’’ which the action of ‘‘keeping firm’’ originates; its object is another *‘‘anfusahum’’* (اَنْفُسَهُمْ = their souls) which is deleted but understood. Accordingly, the phrase means that their souls keep firm their souls.

Alternatively, the word, ‘‘keeping firm’’ may be *‘‘al-maf‘ūlu ’l-muṭlaq’’* (المَفْعُوْلُ المُطْلَقُ = cognate accusative) for emphasis of a deleted but understood verb of the same meaning.

QUR’ĀN: *As the parable of a garden on an elevated ground . . . what you do:* The root word *ar-rabā’* (الرَّبَاءُ) means increase. *‘‘ar-*

Rabwah'' (الرَّبْوَةُ) means a good earth which increases its growth and gives a high yield. The word is also used as *ar-rubwah* (الرُّبْوَةُ) and *ar-ribwah* (الرِّبْوَةُ). *''al-Ukul''* (الأُكُلُ) is what is eaten, *al Aklah* (الأكْلَةُ) means one morsel. *''aṭ-Ṭall''* (الطَّلُّ) is a drizzle, which has little effect.

The parable has been revealed to show that spending which is done to seek the pleasure of Allāh cannot fail to bring about a good effect. The spending was done for Allāh and its connection with Allāh has continued; therefore, divine care always looks after it, making it grow and flourish; it must surely bring forth its fruits. Of course, the degree of care varies according to variation in the degree of purity of the intention; and the strength of the deed is correlated with the firmness of soul.

There is a garden on a good earth; a heavy rain falls on it and it brings forth its fruits abundantly — although the yield may vary in quality and quantity, according to the amount of rain which falls on it.

As there is bound to be such variation, the verse ended on the sentence, ''and Allāh is aware of what you do''. He never has any doubt in the matter of rewards; the rewards of various deeds are never confused in His eyes; He does not give this one's recompense to that one, and that one's to this one.

QUR'ĀN: *Would anyone of you like . . . that you may reflect: ''al-Wudd''* (الوُدُّ) is to love, to long for, to yearn *''al-jannah''* (الجَنَّةُ) is a clump of trees, their branches touching each other. *''al-Jann''* (الجَنُّ) means to cover, to shield. A garden is called *al-jannah* because it covers the earth and protects if from the rays of the sun, and the like. This word is used for a clump of trees only, not for the plot of land upon which those trees stand. That is why it is correct to say, as the verse says, ''streams flowing beneath it''; if the word included the earth, the phrase would have been wrong. When the plot or earth is intended, the expression is changed: . . . *a lofty ground having meadows and springs* (23:50). On the other hand, the phrase, ''garden beneath which rivers flow'', repeatedly occurs in the Qur'ān.

The preposition ''of'', in ''a garden of palms and vines'', is for description; it describes the main type of trees and fruits; it does not give a full list of them. If the major part of a garden contains palms, it is generally called a palm garden, although it contains other trees also.

That is why Allāh said immediately after it, ‘‘he has in it all kinds of fruits’’. *‘‘al-Kibr’’* (الكِبْرُ) is old age; *‘‘adh-dhurriyyah’’*(الذُّرِّيَّةُ) means children, offspring; *‘‘aḍ-ḍu‘afā’ ’’* (الضُّعَفَآءُ) is the plural of *‘‘aḍ-ḍa‘īf’’* (الضَّعِيْفُ = weak).

This parable joins the old age of the progenitor with the weakness of the progeny to emphasize the utmost need of the said garden, in the absence of any other means of livelihood. Had the garden owner been young and strong he could have earned his livelihood with his hands even if the garden had been burnt down. Alternatively, if he had had no weak offspring, even if he had been an aged person, he would not have felt the effects of this calamity so much; he would have known that his days were numbered and soon he would be free from all troubles. And if he had been of old age but had had strong offspring who could have work and earn their livelihood, they could have lived on their earning and the loss of the garden would not have caused much distress. But when old age coincides with weak offspring and the garden is burnt down, all possible means of livelihood are cut off. The old man cannot regain his youth and strength, so that he can re-create the garden as he had done before. His offspring are weak and they cannot do it themselves. And the garden is burnt down, it cannot regain its bloom and fruit.

‘‘al-I‘ṣār’’ (الاعْصَارُ) is a cyclone. This parable puts before our eyes the position of those who spend their wealth and then follow it with reproach and injury, and thus their deed is nullified; and there is no way to return that deed to its state of validity again. The parable perfectly fits this situation.

Through this parable Allāh expects such people to ponder upon their position. Such deeds are done only when people are overtaken by such evil traits as love of wealth and honour, pride and avarice. These evil traits do not let them contemplate and meditate; do not give them a chance to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful, between good and bad. And if they had stopped to ponder they would have seen the truth.

QUR’ĀN: *O you who believe! spend* (benevolently) . . . *Allāh is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy: ‘‘at-Tayammum’’* (التَّيَمُّمُ) is to aim, to intend; *‘‘al-khabīth’’* (الخَبِيْثُ = bad) is opposite of *‘‘aṭ-ṭayyib’’* (الطَّيِّبُ = good); ‘‘of it’’ is related to the word ‘‘bad’’. The phrase ‘‘that you may spend in charity’’ shows the ‘‘state’’ of the subject of the verb ‘‘do not

aim''; the phrase ''while you would not take it yourselves'' shows the ''state'' of the subject of the verb ''you may spend it''; it is governed by the same verb. The phrase ''unless you connive at it'' is in place of an infinitive verb. It is said that a *''li''* (لِ = because) is understood before it — thus it would mean, ''except because of your connivance at it''. Others have said that a *''bi''* (بِ = with) is understood here — in this case it would mean ''except with your connivance at it''

Whatever the grammatical explanation, the meaning of the verse is a quite clear. Allāh explains the condition of the wealth which should be spent: it should be from one's good property; and not from bad property which the spender himself would not deign to accept unless he connived at it. Giving bad wealth in charity is not generosity at all; it is getting rid of an unwanted item. Such spending will not create any love of generosity in the donor's heart, nor will it bring to him any spiritual perfection.

That is why the verse ends on the sentence ''and know that Allāh is Self-suficient, Praiseworthy''. When you spend anything, keep in view the Self-sufficiency and Praiseworthiness of Allāh. He needs nothing, yet He appreciates your good spending. Therefore, spend from your good property.

Or, it may mean: He is Self-sufficient and Praiseworthy. You should not bring to Him what is not fit for His Great Sanctity.

QUR'ĀN: *Satan threatens you with poverty . . . Allāh is Ample-giving, All-knowing:* The verse explains that choosing a bad thing for charity is not good for the charity-giver; it is only good property which is good for them to spend. The prohibition is for their own good, as the thing prohibited is bad for them. They dislike giving good items in charity because they believe that a good property makes one wealthy and rich; they therefore resist the idea of giving it away in charity. A bad item is worthless, and so they are ready to donate it in alms. But it is the temptation of Satan who frightens his friends with poverty. The fact is that donating property and spending it in the way of Allāh to seek His pleasure is just like any other good trade and dealing — it has its recompense and profit, as Allāh has mentioned in these verses. Moreover, it is Allāh who makes one rich and bestows abundance; property, by itself, has no power to enrich anyone. Allāh says: *And that He it is Who enriches and gives to hold* (53:48).

In short, it was a mistake on their part to withhold the good and likeable items from their charity because of fear of poverty. Allāh points this out in the sentence ''Satan threatens you with poverty''. This sentence puts the cause (Satan's threatening) in place of its effect (fear of poverty). This figurative expression has been used to indicate that this fear is damaging to their interest, because whatever Satan incites one to do is bound to be wrong and an error — either directly or indirectly, that is, through something disguised as right.

Someone might have thought that this fear of poverty was reasonable, even if it was caused by Satan. The next sentences do not leave any room for such a misunderstanding: ''and enjoins you to abomination''. This withholding, this heavy-heartedness in spending good things creates in their souls the trait of miserliness and niggardliness, which in its turn leads one to disobey and reject those commands of Allāh that effect one's wealth and property; it is clear disbelief in the Great Lord. Also, it casts the needy people into the perdition of poverty, privation and depression, which in its turn leads to loss of lives, and honour, and to every hope of crime and abomination. Allāh says: *And there are those of them who made a covenant with Allāh: ''If He gives us out of His grace, we will certainly give alms and we will certainly be of the good.'' But when He gave them out of His grace, they became niggardly of it and they turned back and they withdrew. So He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts till the day when they shall meet Him because they failed to perform towards Allāh what they had promised with Him and because they told lies . . . Those who taunt the free-givers of alms among the believers and them who cannot find but their hard earnings, so they scoff at them; Allāh will pay them back their scoffing, for them is a painful chastisement.* (9:75 — 79)

''And Allāh promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance; and Allāh is Ample-giving, All-knowing.'': It further removes the earlier-mentioned possible misunderstanding. Allāh had already clearly told the believers that there is either truth or falsehood; there is no third alternative. Truth is the straight path, that is from Allāh; and falsehood is from Satan., Look at the following verses of the Meccan period: . . . *and what is there after the truth but error?* (10:32); *Say: ''Allāh guides to the truth''* (10:35); . . . *surely he* (i.e. Satan) *is an enemy, openly leading astray* (28:15). In short, the above-mentioned sentence

reminds them that the idea of niggardliness coming into your mind because of the fear of poverty is based on a bad judgement; forgiveness of Allāh and increase in wealth (mentioned in previous verses) come from spending from good property, not from niggardliness or from giving away unwanted items.

The sentence ‘‘Allāh promises . . .’’ puts (like the preceding sentence ‘‘Satan threatens you . . .’’) the cause in place of its effect. Also, it shows the contrast between the promise of Ample-giving, All-knowing Allāh and the threat of Satan, so that the spenders may look at both and choose for themselves what is in their own interest.

The verse, in short says:

You choose bad items for spending, instead of good property, because you are afraid of poverty; and because you are unaware of the good results which accrue from spending good things. So far as the fear of poverty is concerned, it is the evil suggestion of Satan, and Satan always wants to put you in perdition and lead you to falsehood and abomination: you should never follow his evil whisperings. What follows a charity of good things is abundance and forgiveness. And it is sure to follow, because it is Allāh Who has promised it, and His promise is true; He is Ample-giving — it is easy for Him to fulfil His promise and to give you abundance and forgiveness from Himself; He is All-knowing, not a single thing or condition is hidden from Him; therefore, what He has promised is based on His All-encompassing knowledge.

QUR'ĀN: *He grants wisdom to whom He pleases: ‘‘al-Ītā’ ’’* (الاِيْتَآءُ) is to grant, to give. *‘‘al-Ḥikmah’’* (الحِكْمَةُ = wisdom) is on paradigm of *fi‘lah* (فِعْلَةُ) which denotes a species or a variety of it. Its literal meaning will, therefore, be a sort of precision and perfection, or a species of perfect and precise thing in which there is no defect or flaw. Mostly it is used for intellectual cognition that is true and not liable to falsehood and error at all.

This sentence shows that what has preceded it (spending, its causes and its good effects on human life) is based on wisdom. *al-hikmah* (wisdom) is a true proposition, conforming to the facts; it contains the bliss and felicity of man, because it clarifies the divine realities concerning the origin and the end of the world and mankind, and explains the principles of the physical world in-as-much as it touches on human bliss and felicity; it includes the fundamental truths of nature upon which

are based the laws of religion.

QUR'ĀN: *And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good:* The meaning is clear. The sentence is in the passive voice, although the preceding sentence has clearly said that it is Allāh Who grants wisdom; this passive voice has been used to show that wisdom, in itself, is the source of a great good; whoever gets it, is bound to get that great good; and that good is not only because wisdom is given by Allāh. If ''giving'' is attributed to Allāh it does not necessarily mean that the thing given is good, or that it will end in good. Allāh says about the Qur'ān: . . . *and We had given him of the treasures, so much that its keys would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of strength . . . Thus We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode; so he has no body of helpers to assist him against Allāh . . .* (28:76 — 81).

The verse attributes ''great good'' to wisdom, instead of unqualified ''good'', although wisdom has a high status and a great splendour. It was to show that every affair depends, for its good end, on the care and help of Allāh; and that blessings and bliss is good only when its end is good.

QUR'ĀN: *And none but men of understanding mind: ''al-Lubb''* (اللُّبُّ) literally means kernel, the softer part within hard shell. It is used in the meaning of *al-'aql* (العَقْلُ = understanding because understanding has the same position *vis-a-vis* the man as the kernel has *vis-a-vis* its hard shell. It is used in this very meaning in the Qur'ān. The use of the noun *al-'aql* with the meaning of understanding, seems to be of a later origin; that is why it has not been used in this form in the Qur'ān; although its verb have often been used, for example, *''ya'qilūn''* (يَعْقِلُوْنَ = they understand). *''at-Tadhakkur''* (التَّذَكُّرُ) means to remember, to mind. It means going from a conclusion to its premises or from the premises to their conclusion. The verse shows that wisdom depends on minding, which in its turn depends on understanding. There is no wisdom where there is no understanding. Some details about understanding have been given earlier in the discussion about the words used for perception.

QUR'ĀN: *And whatever alms you give or whatever vow you vow surely Allāh knows it; and the oppressors shall have no helpers:* What Allāh has called you to spend, and what you have made obligatory on yourselves through a vow is not hidden from Allāh. He shall give rewards to him who obeys Him, and shall chastise him who is unjust to others and oppresses them. There is a shade of threatening in this sentence (. . .

Allāh knows it), and this is emphasized by the next sentence: ''and the oppressors shall have no helpers''.

This last sentence proves four things:

First: The oppression in this verse means the oppression of the needy and poor by not spending on them and by withholding their financial rights. It does not mean other sins and injustices, because there are helpers, atonements and interceders in the case of other sins. For example, there is repentance, the avoidance of great sins, and the intercessors on they Day of Resurrection for the sins concerning the rights of Allāh. Allāh says: . . . *do not despair of the mercy of Allāh; surely Allāh forgives the faults altogether . . . And return to your Lord . . .* (39:53 — 54); *If you avoid great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your* (small) *sins* (4:31); . . . *and they do not interced except for him whom He approves . . .* (21:28).

This also explains why this verse mentions ''helpers'' (in the plural). It is because there shall be many helpers in case of other sins.

Second: This oppression, that is, neglect of charity, is not liable to expiation. Had it been a minor sin, it would have been wiped out by expiation. In other words, it is a great sin. Also, it proves that it is not forgiven by repentance. It gets support from the traditions which say that repentance from sins concerning the rights of people is not accepted unless the sinner returns and gives all the due rights to those who possess them. Nor shall the intercession of the intercessors avail them on the Day of Resurrection, as is clearly seen in the words of Allāh: *Except the people of the right hand, in gardens; they shall ask each other about the guilty: ''What has brought you into Hell?'' They shall say: ''We were not of those who prayed, and we used not to feed the poor . . .'' So the intercession of the intercessors shall not avail them* (74:39 — 48).

Third: This oppressor is not of those with whom Allāh is pleased. Intercession shall be for only those whose religion Allāh approves and is pleased with. (Vide the topic of Intercession.) This shows why Allāh used, in verse 2:265, the words ''seeking the pleasure of Allāh'', and did not say ''seeking the Person of Allāh''.

Fourth: Not spending property on the needy and poor when they are present and need assistance is a great and mortal sin. Allāh has counted some kinds of not spending as equivalent to ascribing partners to Allāh and disbelieving in the last day. For example, He says about not giving

alms: . . . *and woe to the polytheists, who do not give zakāt and they are unbelievers in the hereafter* (41:6 — 7). It should be noted that this chapter is from the Meccan period when *az-zakāt* (الزَّكوة = poor rate) as known to us was not ordained. Therefore, it must refer to general alms.

QUR'ĀN: *If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to the poor , . . . and Allāh is aware of what you do: ''al-Ibdā' ''* (الإبْدَآءُ) means to show, to exhibit. ''*aṣ-Ṣadaqāt''* (الصَّدَقَاتُ) is the plural of *aṣ-ṣadaqah* (الصَّدَقَةُ), which means expenditure in the way of Allāh; it is a general word used for both obligatory and voluntary spending. Sometimes it is said that its original meaning is voluntary spending.

Allāh praises both ways of spending because each has some good effects. Giving alms openly presents a practical example of enjoining good; it encourages people to spend and to be generous. Also, it makes the needy and poor happy — they see that there are in society people who have sympathy with them, that there is some wealth earmarked for them, and kept in reserve for the day they will need it. This, in its turn, removes their pessimistic feelings, gives them a new vigour to persue their activities, and creates a feeling of oneness between them and the wealthy members of society. And all these effects are good.

Hiding alms and giving secretly to the poor is also good; such an alms-giving is far removed from showiness, reproach and injury; it protects the poor members of society from shame and disgrace, and preserve their honour and prestige in the eyes of the public.

Thus, open charity creates good effects in society much more than secret charity; and secret charity is purer in intention.

The foundation of religion is purity of intention; the more a deed is nearer to this purity, the more it is nearer to excellence. That is why Allāh gave more weight to secret alms: ''and if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you''. Needless to say that ''better'' is in the comparative.

And Allāh is well-aware of the actions of His servants; there is no chance of His mistaking the ''better'' deed for some thing else, ''and Allāh is aware of what you do''.

QUR'ĀN: *To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases:* It is a parenthetic sentence addressed to the Prophet, in between the general talk addressed to the believers. The Apostle of Allāh felt that there were many

differences in various aspects of the charities given by the believers: some of them were sincere, while others indulged in reproach and injury, or were reluctant to spend out of their good property. This observation saddened him, because all of them were believers. Therefore, Allāh consoled and comforted him by reminding him that the belief found in them and their guidance are in the hands of Allāh; He guides whom He pleases to belief and the various degrees of it; it is not in the power of the Prophet to create it or to preserve it. Therefore, it is not the responsibility of the Prophet to preserve their belief, nor should he worry about its weakening or extinction, nor should he be disappointed by the threatenings and harsh tone used in some of these verses.

When an infinitive verb is joined to a noun or pronoun in a possessive phrase, it implies that verb's coming into being. In this verse Allāh has used the phrase *''hudāhum''*(هُدَاهُمْ) which means ''their guidance''. As explained above, it implies the ''guidance'' which actually exists. That is why we have translated it as ''To make them walk in the right path''.

Apart from this, whenever Allāh has attributed guidance to Himself, showing that the Prophet has no power to guide them, it has been done to comfort and console him.

In short, this sentence is parenthetic, inserted between the address to the believers, so that the Prophet may not be disheartened. It is like verse 75:16 — 18: *Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. Surely on Us is the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore when We have recited it, then follow its recitation.*

When the purpose was served, the speech reverted to the original talk with the believers.

QUR'ĀN: *And whatever good thing you spend . . . and you shall not be wronged:* Now the speech is again addressed to the believers, in a style which is devoid of both good news and warning, unaffected by the tone of mercy or anger. Obviously, it results from the preceding words, ''but Allāh guides aright whom He pleases''.

Now the speech only calls them to spend, clearly saying that the speaker has nothing to gain from this call. Whatever benefits are in spending are for their own good — provided they do not spend except to seek Allāh's pleasure. The sentence ''and you do not spend but to seek Allāh's pleasure'' shows the state of the principle sentence, and its meaning is: ''and whatever good things you spend it is to your own

good while you do not spend but to seek Allāh's pleasure''.

As it was possible for someone to think that this benefit (which was supposed to accrue to them from spending) was just a name without any substance, Allāh continued the verse, saying ''and whatever good thing you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged''. These sentences make it clear that the benefit of this recommended spending, that is, the reward promised for it in this world and in the hereafter, is not an imaginary thing; it is a factual and actual existent; Allāh shall pay it back in full to the spender, and he shall not be wronged, that is, his repayment shall not be reduced or lost.

The verb, ''shall be paid back to you in full'', is in the passive voice. The payer (i.e. Allāh) has not been mentioned by name. This style was opted for so that the speech may be more effective. Whatever benefit is there, is for the spender only; the Giver of the rewards gains nothing from it; look here, even His name is not mentioned in this verse.

The verse, in short, is like a speech which has no speaker; if there is any benefit from it, it will accrue to the listener only.

QUR'ĀN: (Charity is) *for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allāh . . . surely Allāh knows it: ''al-Ḥaṣr''* (الحَصْرُ) gives the meaning of constraint. ar-Rāghib has written in his *al-Mufradāt: al-Ḥaṣr* and *''al-iḥṣār''* (الاحْصَارُ) mean to prevent people from the way of the House (of Allāh). *al-iḥṣār* is used for the manifest hindrance (like the enemy) as well as for the hidden snag (like sickness). But *al-ḥaṣr* is used for the hidden hindrance only. Therefore, the words of Allāh: *but if you be prevented* (2:196), cover both types of hindrance; so also are the words ''for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allāh''. But the words of Allāh ''or who come to you, their hearts shrinking'' refer to hidden hindrances like cowardice and miserliness.

''*at-Ta'affuf''* (التَّعَفُّفُ) means to acquire the characteristics of chastity and integrity; *''as-sīmā''* (السِّيْمَا) is the sign, the mark, *''al-ilḥāf''* (الاِلْحَافُ) is to beg importunately.

The verse explains the way to use alms — the best use: those poor persons who have been besieged in the way of Allāh and are confined in it, because of some factors beyond their control. For example: an enemy who took away their dress and covering, or prevented them from going out to earn their livelihood; a sickness which closed the door of income

for them; an activity (like acquiring knowledge) which does not leave them time to earn their livelihood.

The words, ‘‘the ignorant man (i.e., ignorant of their condition) thinks them to be rich on account of their self-control’’, mean that they do not display their poverty, except that which cannot be hidden in any way, like the etchings of poverty on their faces, or like old clothes, etc.

It is said that the words ‘‘they do not beg from men importunately’’ mean that they do not beg from men at all, so that it could push them to importunity. Once a man begs from someone for his needs, he loses his restraint and soon a time comes when he begs from everyone importunately and shamelessly.

More probably, the sentence means what it says; it negates importunity in asking from men, and not discrete asking. Importunate begging may mean such asking which exceeds the limit of the necessary description of one’s needs. It should not be forgotten that explaining one’s needs in extreme hardship is not only allowed but sometimes becomes even necessary. But exceeding that limit is importunity, and is condemned.

Allāh said ‘‘thou canst recognize them by their countenance’’; and did not say ‘‘you can recognize them’’. It was done to protect their honour and preserve their self-respect, because of which they exercised self-control and did not ask from men indiscreetly. Had Allāh said ‘‘you can recognize them’’ it would have meant that their poverty was well-known to everyone; and it would have been against their honour, an open humiliation. But there is no disgrace for them if the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) knows their conditions by looking at their countenance: after all, he is their Prophet, sent to them, has mercy on them and is kind to them. This is the reason — and Allāh knows better — why in this sentence the singular pronoun has been used, in contrast to the other pronouns in this verse.

QUR’ĀN: *Those who spend their wealth . . . nor shall they grieve:* The words ‘‘secretly’’ and ‘‘openly’’ are opposite to each other and they describe the condition of spending. This verse covers all possible times (*by night and by day*) and conditions (*secretly and openly*) of spending; it shows how much those spenders were keen on obtaining the reward, and how deep was their desir o seek the pleasure of Allāh. As a result, Allāh turned towards them with mercy and promised them a good

promise in the language of kindness and grace: ‘‘for them is their reward with their Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve’’.

TRADITIONS

It is narrated in *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr,* about the words of Allāh: *and Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases:* Ibn Mājah has narrated from al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Abu ’d-Dardā’, Abū Hurayrah, Abū Amāmah al-Bāhilī, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh and ‘Imrān ibn Ḥaṣīn, all of them narrating from the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) that he said : (And Ibn Mājah and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have narrated from ‘Imrān ibn Ḥaṣīn from the Messenger of Allāh that he said:) ‘‘He who spent a property in the way of Allāh and himself stayed in his house, shall get for every dirham seven hundred dirhams; and he, who himself fought in the way of Allāh and spent his property in this way, shall get on the Day of Resurrection for every dirham seven hundred thousand dirhams’’. Then he (the Prophet) recited this verse: *and Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases.*

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ‘‘When a believer does well in his deed, Allāh multiplies his deed, every good deed seven hundred times. And this is the word of Allāh: *and Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases.* Therefore, make good your deeds which you do to obtain the reward of Allāh.’’ (*at-Tafsīr* of al-‘Ayyāshī)

This tradition has been narrated by al-Barqī also.

‘Umar ibn Muslim said: ‘‘I heard Abū ‘Abdillāh (a.s.) saying: ‘When a believer does well in his deed, Allāh multiplies his deed, every good deed seven hundred times. And this is the word of Allāh: *and Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases.* Therefore, make good your deeds which you do to obtain the reward of Allāh.’ I (i.e. ‘Umar ibn Muslim) said: ‘And what does ‘‘making good’’ mean?’ He said: ‘When you pray, make your *rukū‘* and *sajdah* good, and when you fast, keep away from that which spoils your fast, and when you do *ḥajj,* be on guard against all that is forbidden to you in your *ḥajj* and *‘umrah.’* Then he said: ‘And every deed that you do should be clean from impurity.’ ’’(*ibid.*)

In the same book there is a tradition from Ḥimrān from Abū Ja‘far

(a.s.). Ḥimrān said: ‘‘I asked him (i.e. Abū Ja‘far - a.s.): ‘Do you think that a believer has superiority over a Muslim in anything like inheritance, judgements and orders, so that a believer should have more than a Muslim in inheritance or other things?’ He said: ‘No. They both proceed on the same path (i.e., are equal) in all this, when the Imām decides between them; but the believer has a superiority over the Muslim in so far as their deeds are concerned.’ ’’ He (Ḥimrān) said: ‘‘I told him: ‘Has not Allāh said: *Whoever brings a good deed he shall have ten like it?* And you think that they (i.e., the other Muslims) are gathered together with the believers in prayer, fasting and the *ḥajj*?’ He (the Imām) said: ‘Has not Allāh said that Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases manifold? Thus, the believers are those for whom the good deeds are multiplied, for every good deed seventy fold; so this is among their excellence; and Allāh multiplies for the believer his good deeds according to the rectitude of his belief a manifold multiplication; and Allāh does for the believer what He pleases.’ ’’

The author says: There are other traditions with this meaning. And all of them are based on the view that the sentence: *and Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases* is general, and that it covers doers of other good deeds also, in addition to those who spend in the way of Allāh. And this view is the correct one; because the only thing that can be said for limiting it to the spenders is the fact that it was revealed in the context of spending; but we know that if a verse is revealed at a certain time or in a certain context, that time or that context does not restrict the general meaning of the word or the sentence.

And as the verse is not limited to spending, likewise, the word *‘‘yuḍā‘if’’* (يُضَاعِفُ = increases, multiplies) should be treated as general; it implies every kind of increase, in number as well as in other ways. In short, the meaning of the verse will be: And Allāh increases, enhances and multiplies a good deed in any way He pleases for anyone He pleases; He multiplies for every doer of good his good deed seven hundred times, or more, or less, as He increases for those who spend more than seven hundred times when He so pleases.

Question: You said earlier that it was wrong to interpret this sentence as saying ‘‘and Allāh multiplies this multiplication for whom He pleases’’, and now you interpret it here in this very way.

Reply: What we refuted there was limiting this meaning to those who

spend. And this tradition also rejects the idea that the verse is limited in any way.

The words of the Imām ‘‘Allāh multiplies for whom He pleases manifold’’ combine two verses together: one, this very verse under discussion, and second, verse 245 of this second chapter: *Who is it that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold.*

It may be inferred from this traditon that the deeds of (those of) other sects of Islam (apart from the believers) may be accepted and given their reward. We shall discuss this topic under verse 98 of chap. 4: *Except the weakened ones from among the men . . .*

The author of *Majma‘u ’l-bayān* says: This verse is general about spending in all these things (i.e. *jihād* and other ways of charity); and the same is narrated from Abū ‘Abdillāh (a.s.).

‘Abdu ’r-Razzāq has narrated in his *al-Muṣannaf* from Ayyūb that he said : ‘‘A man came to the Prophet from Ra’s Tall. There-upon they (i.e. the companions) said: ‘How brave is this man? Would that his bravery were in the way of Allāh!’ The Prophet said: ‘Is only he who was killed in the way of Allāh?’ Then he explained: ‘The one who went out in the earth seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain his parents is in the way of Allāh; and the one who went out seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain his family is in the way of Allāh; and the one who went out seeking a lawful (earning) to sustain himself is in the way of Allāh; and the one who went out vying in exuberance is in the way of Satan.’ ’’ (*ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*)

Ibnu ’l-Mundhir and al-Ḥākim have narrated (and the latter has said that it is correct) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) asked al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib: ‘‘O Barā’! How is your spending for your mother?’’ (And al-Barā’ was generous to his family.) He replied: ‘‘O Messenger of Allāh! How good it is! (i.e, it is very good).’’ (The Prophet) said: ‘‘Verily, your expenditure on your family and child and servant is alms; therefore, you should not follow it with reproach or injury.’’ (*ibid.*)

The author says: The traditions containing this meaning are numerous from the chains of both sects; and those traditions say that every deed which Allāh is pleased with is in the way of Allāh; and every expenditure in the way of Allāh is alms.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī, under the verse: ‘‘Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allāh . . . ’’, from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.)

that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘‘Whoever conferred something good on a believer and then injured him (i.e. his feelings) with his talk or reproached him has surely nullified his charity . . .’’ aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: *aṣ-Ṣafwān* (الصَّفْوَانُ) is a big rock in a desert. *al-Wābil* (الوَابِلُ) is rain; and *aṭ-ṭall* (الطَّلُّ) is what settles at night on trees and plants. *al-I‘ṣār* (الإعْصَارُ) is wind.

Ibn Jarīr has recorded from ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) about the words of Allāh: *O you who believe! spend* (benevolently) *out of the good things that you have earned* (he said, ‘‘from gold and silver’’), *and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth,* (he said, ‘‘from grain and dates and everything in which *zakāt* is prescribed). (*ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*)

Ibn Abī Shaybah, ‘Abd ibn Ḥamīd, at-Tirmidhī (and he has said that this tradition is correct), Ibn Mājah, Ibn Jarīr, Ibnu ’l-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Ḥākim; (and he has said that it is correct) and al-Bayhaqī (in his *as-Sunan)* have narrated from al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib, that he said about the words of Allāh, *and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend* (in charity): ‘‘It was revealed about us, the group of the Helpers (*anṣār*). We owned date-palms. (It was our custom that) a man used to come from his trees, however numerous or few they might be; and he brought a bunch of dates or two, and hung it in the mosque; and the people of the ‘‘raised platform’’ (*Ahlu ’ṣ-Ṣuffah*) had nothing to sustain them. Therefore, when one of them felt hungry, he used to come to that bunch and hit it with his stick; thus, unripe and ripe dates dropped down and he ate them. And there were some people, not inclined to generosity, who brought bunches which had gone bad and had dried, and also broken bunches; and they hung them (in the mosque). Thereupon, Allāh sent down the verse: *O you who believe! spend* (benevolently) *out of the good things that you have earned and what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend* (in charity), *while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it.* Allāh commented that if one of you were given a present like that which he gave in charity he would not accept it except if he connived at it or felt shy of rejecting it.’’ al-Barā’ then said: ‘‘Therefore, everyone of us used to bring the best that he had.’’ (*ibid.*)

There is a tradition in *al-Kāfī,* that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allāh: *O you who believe! spend* (benevolently) *out of the*

good things that you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend (in charity): ‘‘When the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) ordered *az-zakāt* (poor-rate) on dates, some people used to bring various types of dates as poor-rate, (dates) of the worst kind. They took out as their poor-rate the dates called *aj-ju‘rūr* and *al-mi‘āfārah,* those with little flesh and big stones. And others brought good dates. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘Do not estimate these two (types of) dates and do not bring any of them (as poor-rate).’ And concerning this was revealed: *and do not aim at what is bad of it that you may spend* (in charity), *while you would not take it yourselves unless you connived at it.* And conniving means to take these two dates.’’

There is another tradition from Abū ‘Abdillāh (a.s.) about the above-mentioned verse, that he said: ‘‘The people had earned bad earnings in the (days of) ignorance. When they became Muslims, they wanted to take that (unlawful earning) from their property to give it in charity. But Allāh did not allow them except that they should take out from the best of their earnings.’’

The author says: There are may traditions with this meaning from the chains of the both sects.

It is quoted in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī about the words of Allāh: *Satan threatens you with poverty* . . . that Allāh means, ‘‘Satan tells you, ‘Do not spend, otherwise you shall become poor’, and Allāh promises you forgiveness from Himself and abundance’’, that is, He shall give you if you spend for His sake and shall reimburse you abundantly.

at-Tirmidhī (and he has said that this tradition is correct), an-Nasā’ī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibnu ’l-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥibbān and al-Bayhaqī (in his *ash-Shu‘ab*) have narrated from Ibn Mas‘ūd that he said that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘‘Verily, Satan has a nearness with the son of Adam and the angel has a nearness (with him). As for the nearness of Satan, it is a threatening with evil and a denying of truth. And as for the nearness of the angel, it is promising of good and a confirming of truth; therefore, whoever felt it, should know that it is from Allāh, so let him thank Allāh. And whoever felt that other (effect), should seek the protection of Allāh against Satan.’’ Then (the Messenger of Allāh) recited: *Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to abomination* . . . (*ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*)

at-Tafsīr of al-'Ayyāshī quotes Abū Ja'far (a.s.) about the words of Allāh, *and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good,* that he said: ''The knowledge (of Allāh). ''

The same book quotes aṣ-Sādiq (a.s.) as saying: ''Verily, wisdom is the knowledge (of Allāh) and understanding of the religion.''

al-Kāfī quotes aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) as saying in explanation of this verse : ''Obedience to Allāh and knowledge of the Imām.''

The author says: There are other traditions with the same meaning; and they present some examples of a general meaning.

There is in *al-Kāfī* a tradition: from a group of our companions, from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālid, from some of our companions, who mentioned the chain of narrators reaching the Messenger of Allāh; the narrator said that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ''Allāh did not distribute among (His) servants anything better than wisdom; so, the sleep of the wise is better than the wakefulness of the ignorant, and the staying of the wise is better than the rising of the ignorant. And Allāh did not send any prophet nor any apostle till (his) understanding was perfected and his wisdom was superior to all the wisdom of his people. And what the prophet keeps hidden in his mind is superior to the endeavours of the endeavourers. And the servant does not fulfil his obligations (towards) Allāh until he knows Him; and all the worshippers together do not reach in the excellence of their worship what a wise (person) attains; and the wise people are the people of understanding; Allāh says: *and none but men of understanding mind.*''

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''Wisdom is the light of knowledge, and the weighing scale of piety, and the fruit of truth; and if you were to say that Allāh did not bestow upon His servant a bounty greater and higher and better and more magnificent than wisdom, you would be saying (the truth). Allāh, Powerful and Great is He, has said: *He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good; and none but men of understanding mind.*''

The author says: There are many traditions about the verse: *And whatever alms you give . . .,* concerning the alms, the vow and the injustice, which we shall write, God willing, in more appropriate places.

It is reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from several chains from Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Jubayr, Asmā' bint Abī Bakr and others that the Messenger of Allāh used to forbid (the giving of) alms to non-Muslims; and the

Muslims disliked spending on their non-believing relatives. Then, Allāh sent down this verse: *To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you . . .* Thereupon, (the Messenger of Allāh) allowed it.

The author says: It has already been explained that the phrase *''hudāhum''* (هُدَاهُمْ = their guidance; to make them walk in the right way) appropriately means guiding the Muslims themselves by making them follow the right path; it has no connection with the unbelievers. The verse, therefore, is quite unrelated to the story of its revelation mentioned in the above report. Moreover, the very next verse which prescribes the group on which the alms should be spent (*for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allāh . . .*) does not support this story.

So far as spending on a non-Muslim is concerned, the generality of the verse is enough to allow it provided it is done in the way of Allāh and to seek the pleasure of Allāh.

al-Kāfī quotes aṣ-Sādiq (a.s.) about the words of Allāh: *And if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you,* that he said: ''It is in other than *az-zakāt;* verily *az-zakāt* is openly, not secretly.''

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imām: ''Whatever Allāh has made obligatory on you, announcing it is better than hiding it; and whatever is voluntary, hiding it is better than announcing it.''

The author says: There are other traditions with the same meanings as the two above traditions. And its meaning may be clearly understood from earlier explanations.

It is written in *Majma'u 'l-bayān,* under the verse: (Charity is) *for the poor who are besieged in the way of Allāh . . .,* that Abū Ja'far (a.s.) said: ''It was revealed about the companions of the raised platform.'' the author of *Majma'u 'l-bayān* goes on to say that the same thing has been narrated by al-Kalbī from Ibn 'Abbās. ''And they were about four hundred men; they had no houses in Medina, nor were there any people of their clans where they could find shelter. Therefore, they got themselves settled in the mosque; and they said: 'We shall go out in every expedition sent by the Messenger of Allāh.' Therefore, Allāh exhorted the people to (help) them. Then (it became a custom that) if a man took his meal and some food was left over, he brought it to them.''

In *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī, Abū Ja'far (a.s.) is quoted as saying: ''Verily Allāh hates the one who begs importunately.''

It is written in *Majma'u 'l-bayān,* under the words of Allāh: ''Those who spend their wealth by night and by day . . .'' Ibn 'Abbās said describing the reason of its revelation: ''It was revealed about 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.); he had four dirhams; and he gave them in charity, one at night-time, and one in the day-time, one secretly and one openly. Then came down this verse: *Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly . . .''* aṭ-Ṭabrisī (author of *Majma'u 'l-bayān*) further said: ''And the same is narrated from Abū Ja'far (a.s.) and Abū 'Abdillāh (a.s.).''

The author says: And this thing has been narrated by al-'Ayyāshī in his *at-Tafsīr;* al-Mufīd in his *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ,* and aṣ-Ṣadūq in his *'Uyūnu 'l-akhbār.*

'Abdu 'r-Razzāq, 'Abd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibnu 'l-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, aṭ-Ṭabarānī and Ibn 'Asākir have narrated through the chain of 'Abdu '1-Wahhāb ibn Mujāhid from his father from Ibn 'Abbās about the words of Allāh: *Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly . . .,* that he said: ''It was revealed about 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) that he had four dirhams; and he spent them (in charity) at night one dirham, and in the day one dirham, and secretly one dirham, and openly one dirham.'' (*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*)

al-Burhān (*Tafsīr*) quotes Ibn Shahrāshūb (in his *al-Manāqib*) who narrated from Ibn 'Abbās, as-Suddī, Mujāhid, al-Kalbī, Abū Ṣāliḥ, al-Wāḥidī, aṭ-Ṭūsī, ath-Tha'labī, aṭ-Ṭabrisī, al-Māwardī, al-Qushayrī, ath-Thumālī, an-Naqqāsh, al-Fattāl, 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥusayn and 'Alī ibn Ḥarb aṭ-Ṭā'ī (in their books of *at-Tafsīr*) that: 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib had some silver dirhams; so he gave in charity one at night and one in the day, and one secretly, and one openly. Thereupon was revealed (the verse): *Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly . . .* Thus Allāh named (his) every dirham a wealth and gave him the good news of acceptance.

It is written in some books of *tafāsīr* (pl. of *tafsīr*, i.e., commentary) that the verse was revealed about Abū Bakr; he gave in charity forty thousand dinars — ten by night, and ten by day and ten secretly and ten openly.

The author says: al-Ālūsī has written in his *at-Tafsīr* under this tradition: ''al-Imāmu 's-Suyūṭī has commented that the report of his (i.e., Abū Bakr's) giving forty thousand dinars in charity has only been

narrated by Ibn ‘Asākir in his history from ‘Ā’ishāh, and there is no mention of the revelation of this verse in that report. It seems that those who claimed it (i.e., the revelation of the verse about Abū Bakr) inferred it from the tradition narrated by Ibnu ’l-Mundhir from Ibn Isḥāq that he said: ‘When Abū Bakr died and ‘Umar became Khalīfah, he addressed the people; he thanked Allāh and praised Him as He should be praised; then he said: ‘‘O people! verily, some avarice is poverty, and some abandoning of hope is self-sufficiency; and verily you gather what you do not eat, and you hope for what you do not get. And know that some miserliness is a branch of hypocrisy; therefore, spend for your own good.’’ Then he said: ‘‘So where are the people of this verse?’’ — and saying it, he recited this verse. And you know that these words do not show in any way that this verse was revealed about Abū Bakr.’ ’’

It is reported in *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr,* through various chains, from Abū Amāmah, Abu ’d-Dardā’, Ibn ‘Abbās and others that the verse was revealed about the people of the horses.

The author says: ‘‘The people of the horses’’ refers to those who kept the horses (for the purpose of *jihād*) and spent on them by night and by day. But the wording of the verse, ‘‘secretly and openly’’, does not fit this interpretation. What would be the sense of this generalization and particularization in the case of spending on horses?

There is also in *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr* from al-Musayyab that this whole verse was revealed in praise of ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf and ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān when they spent on ‘‘the army of straitened circumstances’’ (i.e., army of Tabūk).

The author says: The same objection arises here as has been levelled against the preceding interpretation — that it does not fit the wordings of the Qur’ān.

* * * * *

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لاَ يَقُومُونَ إِلاَّ كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ
مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ
الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ
فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ - ٢٧٥ . يَمْحَقُ اللهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرْبِي
الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ -٢٧٦ . إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَوٰةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلاَ خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ - ٢٧٧. يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ
مِنَ الرِّبَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ-٢٧٨. فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِنَ اللهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُؤُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لاَ تَظْلِمُونَ وَلاَ تُظْلَمُونَ- ٢٧٩٠ وَإِنْ كَانَ
ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَى مَيْسَرَةٍ وَإِنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ -٢٨٠٠
وَاتَّقُوا يَوْماً تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لاَ
يُظْلَمُونَ - ٢٨١ ٠

Those who swallow down interest cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) *touch does stand. That is because they say, trade is only like interest. And Allāh has allowed trade and forbidden interest. To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allāh; and whoever returns* (to it) — *these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it* (275). *Allāh effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow; and Allāh does not love any ungrateful sinner* (276). *Surely they who believe and do good deeds and establish prayer and pay the poor-rate they shall have their reward with*

their Lord and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve (277). *O you who believe! fear Allāh and forgo what remains* (due) *from interest, if you are believers* (278). *But if you do* (it) *not, then be apprised of war from Allāh and His Apostle; and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly* (279). *And if* (the debtor) *is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until* (he is in) *ease; and that you remit* (it) *as alms is better for you, if you knew* (280). *And fear the day in which you shall be returned to Allāh; then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly* (281).

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GENERAL COMMENT

These verses were revealed to emphasize the prohibition of interest and to put strong pressure on the interest-takers; they are not the verses that originally legislated the prohibition of interest; their language is not that of legislation. The law forbidding interest was ordained most probably by the following verse of the third chapter :

O you who believe! do not devour interest, making it double and redouble, and fear Allāh, that you may succeed (3:130).

Also look at one of the verses under discussion: ‘‘O you who believe! fear Allāh and forgo what remains (due) from interest, if you are believers’’. It shows that the Muslims, even after the previous prohibition, sometimes took interest; and therefore Allāh ordered them to desist from this practice and to remit that part of the interest which remained due from the debtors. With this background, the meaning of the following sentence becomes quite clear: ‘‘To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allāh . . .’’

Even long before the verse of the third chapter, a Meccan chapter (the

30th), had condemned the practice of taking interest: *And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the properties of men, it shall not increase with Allāh; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allāh's pleasure — it is these* (persons) *that shall get manifold* (30:39).

It shows that interest was a thing abhored since the early days of the Call, before the *hijrah;* then it was clearly forbidden in the third chapter; and finally it was most forcefully condemned and denounced in these seven verses (under discussion), the style of which clearly shows that interest was forbidden long before they were revealed. It also proves that these seven verses were revealed after the third chapter.

Moreover, interest was prohibited in Judaism, as Allāh says about the Jews: *And their* (Jews') *taking interest, though indeed forbidden were they against it* (4:161); and also He says quoting them: *this is because they say: there is nothing upon us in the matter of the unlearned people* (3:75). Add to it the fact that the Qur'ān verified their book and did not abrogate this law. All of this together was enough to make the Muslims understand that interest was prohibited and forbidden in Islam.

These verses of interest have some connection with the preceding verses of spending in the way of Allāh. And this connection has been clearly pointed out in these verses: for example, ''Allāh effaces interest and He causes charities to grow''; ''and that you remit (it) as alms is better for you''. Likewise the verse of the thirtieth chapter contrasts it with alms; and that of the third chapter is followed by praise of spending, exhorting the believers to spend benevolently in the way of Allāh.

Moreover, reason also recognizes the contrast and mutual opposition of interest and charity. Interest is taking without giving anything in exchange; charity is giving without taking anything in exchange. The evils emanating from interest are poles apart from the good effects of charity. Charity spreads mercy and love, strengthens the morale of the poor members of society, increases wealth, maintains good social order, and then as a result of mutual love and respect, peace reigns over the land. The evils resulting from interest are exactly opposite to these good effects.

Allāh has, in these verses, condemned interest in the most emphatic words. No other deed has been condemned in such a harsh tone. The only exception is befriending the enemies of religion, which also has been

execrated with equal force. All other major sins have been condemned emphatically in the Qur'ān, but the level of their condemnation is far below that used for these two evils. Not only fornication, liquor and gambling, but even more grievous sins like murder and creating mischief in the earth seem milder than these two — interest and making friends with the enemies of religion. Why? The reason is very clear. The bad effects of the above-mentioned sins remain mostly confined to individuals, one or more; further, they impair only some particular psychological traits of the doer.

But these two evils bring such destruction in their wake that religion is uprooted and even its signs are obliterated; the life-line of human social order is severed; human nature is over-powered by their harmful intoxication, and it loses all its control over the people's thinking and action.

History has shown why the Qur'ān had spoken so forcefully against befriending the enemies of religion and against interest. Look at the pitiable condition of the Muslim countries. They started adulating the enemies of Islam, making friends with them and adoring them. They inclined psychologically towards them. And now we see the result: they have fallen down into the pit of perdition; they are plundered and pillaged by the same ''beloved'' enemies; they have no control over their own destiny; they have lost their wealth, their honour and even their identity; they deserve neither death nor life; they are not allowed to die, and they are not given any breathing space to enjoy the bounties of life. Religion has departed from there, and virtue abandoned them long ago.

As for interest, it caused the treasures of the earth to be concentrated in few select houses, and the wealth to be hoarded by the takers of interest. The money gave them power over other less fortunate human beings. It was the real cause of the world wars. It divided mankind into two opposing groups: the wealthy who enjoy all the blessings of life, and the poor who fmd it difficult to meet their barest necessities. The grouping has already appeared. It is a calamity which has shaken the earth and levelled the mountains. It is threatening humanity with downfall and the world with destruction. *Then evil was the end of those who did evil* (30:10).

You will see that what Allāh described about interest and making

friends with the enemies of religion was a forecast of the carnage .which has now come true.

COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *Those who swallow down interest cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with* (his) *touch does stand: ''al-Khabṭ''* (الخَبْطُ) means to walk unevenly; to grope about awkwardly. They say *khabaṭa 'l-ba'īr* (خَبَطَ الْبَعِيْرُ = the camel became disorientated in its walk).

Man has a straight path for his life, from which he normally does not deviate. He acts according to the norms of the society in which he lives; those norms are based on reasonable ideas, and man tries to fit his individual and social activities to them. He eats when he is hungry, drinks when thirsty, desires rest when tired, and looks for shelter when staying somewhere, and so on. He feels happy with some things, and becomes annoyed with others. When he wants some task done, he produces its cause, and when he needs an effect, he brings about its necessary ingredients.

This, in short, is man's normal way of life — the actions related to the ideas, in a well-balanced relationship. Man was guided to this straight path by a power ingrained in his nature, the power that discrimantes between good and bad, differentiates between beneficial and harmful, and distinguishes virtue from evil.

But a man whose discriminating power is confounded sees no difference between good and bad, between beneficial and harmful and between virtue and evil. He treats every thing like its opposite. It is not because he has forgotten the meaning of good and bad — after all, he is a human being who has his own freewill and choice, and a man can only do a man's deeds. Rather, it happens because he believes evil to be virtue, and virtue to be evil. He is, in short, confused and confounded; he applies the rules in completely wrong places, and does not know which demands which.

It is not that he always treats the normal as abnormal and vice versa. If it were so, he would have at least been consistent in his

misjudgements. We could have said that he had some organized way of thinking, although he applied his judgements in a wrong way. But he has not even this consistency. Good and bad, virtue and evil, normal and abnormal, all are equal in his eyes. Whatever he wants at a given moment is to be done and obtained — like a camel that has become disorientated; he starts walking forward, no matter which direction he happens to face at that time; he has lost his bearing, and normal and abnormal are the same to him.

This is, then, the condition of the interest-taker.

What do we mean by interest? It is giving a thing and later taking back a similar thing plus an increase. Social life is based on a sound principle. Let us say that Zayd has a property in excess of his needs, and he needs something else which Bakr has got. Now Zayd may give his excess property to Bakr and take in exchange Bakr's property (which, incidently, is in excess of Bakr's requirements). It is trade and it is the dictate of human nature.

But giving a property and taking back a similar thing with some increase nullifies the demands of nature and destroys the basis of the economy. The property is snatched from the hands of the debtor, and accumulates in the coffers of the interest-taker. The interest-taker's wealth grows and grows; but this growth is achieved by adding another man's wealth. Thus wealth goes on decreasing and diminishing, on the one side, and increasing and accumulating on the other.

The debtor who has to pay interest is burdened with that much extra expenditure; as the days pass, he goes on paying interest, without getting anything in exchange; his need of more and more money increases and he is caught in a vicious circle — he must borrow ever more to fulfil his normal needs as well as to pay the ever-increasing expense of interest. Thus his life is ruined.

Interest is, therefore, diametrically opposed to the balance and equilibrium of society; it destroys that system which man had created with the guidance of the Divine Creation.

So, this is the interest-taker, confounded like the one touched by Satan. Taking interest makes his reason topsy-turvy; he sees no difference between normal and abnormal, between trade and interest. When he is told to leave interest and stick to trade, he says: "Trade is

only like interest; it has no superiority over interest; why should I leave interest and stick to trade?'' That is why Allāh showed his confusion by quoting his reply, ''trade is only like interest''.

From the above discourse, the following matters become quite clear:

First: The word ''standing'' in the phrase, ''cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch does stand'', means ''managing'' one's life and ''looking after'' one's livelihood. It is one of the meanings of ''standing'' which people generally use in their speech. Allāh says: . . . *so that men may stand with justice* (57:25); . . . *the heavens and the earth stand by His command* (30:25); . . . *and that you should stand for the orphans with justice* (4:127). This word has not been used here with the meaning of ''standing up'' (i.e., as opposed to ''sitting''), because such an interpretation would not fit the topic, and the meaning of the verse would not be correct.

Second: ''Confoundedness of the touched one in standing'' does not refer to the involuntary movements of an epileptic during or after an attack of epilepsy, as some commentators have written. Such a meaning would have no relevance to the topic at hand. Allāh has given us the simile of the interest-taker who does not differentiate between trade and interest, and who acts according to that idea. This is done by his own choice and will — the choice that is based on his confused thinking. There is nothing in it like the involuntary convulsions of an epileptic.

This phrase, in short, means that the interest-taker manages the affairs of his life and livelihood as does the one whom Satan has confounded with his touch.

Third: There is a fine point in saying ''they say, trade is only like interest'' instead of saying ''interest is only like trade''. The reason for choosing the former expression may be understood from the above explanations. For an interest-taker, normal and abnormal are both alike. We shall explain it in detail later on.

Fourth: The similitude, that is, ''as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch'', gives a hint that this may happen sometimes in cases of lunacy. The verse does not say that every madness is caused by the touch of Satan; but it indicates that some cases of lunacy are the result of Satan's touch. Further, the verse does not say that this touching is done by Iblīs himself, because Satan means the evil one; this word (Satan) is

used for Iblīs as well as for other evil ones among the jinn and human beings. And Iblīs is from the jinn. What looks certain from this Qur'ānic hint is that the jinn are instrumental in the madness of some persons, if not of all.

Some commentators have opined that this simile is not based on any fact. People in those days believed that lunacy was caused by the touch of the jinn; and Allāh used that belief of their's for this similitude; it is just talking to people in their own language. There is, of course, no harm in it, because it is just a similitude; it does not confirm that common belief. Such a comparison is not wrong just because the thing has no actual existence. What the verse, therefore, means is simply this: 'These swallowers of interest are like a lunatic who is confounded by the touch of Satan.' It is against belief in the Justice of Allāh to say that madness could be caused by the touch of Satan. Allāh is Just; He cannot give Satan authority to overpower the intellect of His servant, or to subdue His believing servant.

But this opinion has many flaws:

1) Allāh is too Great to insert any vain or incorrect promise in His talk without indicating its invalidity. Allāh has said about His Book: *and most surely it is a Mighty Book; falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it, a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One* (41:41 — 42); *Most surely it is a decisive word, and it is no joke* (86:13 — 14).

2) He says that it is against belief in the Justice of Allāh to say that Satan can manipulate and disturb the intellect of a person, and can turn him into a lunatic. Well, is it not against belief in the Justice of Allāh to say that lunacy occurs because of natural causes? Are not the natural causes created by Allāh? And yet they do disturb the mind of man.

The fact is that there is no problem in believing that Allāh allows the mind of man to be disturbed — no matter through which agency it is done. Because Allāh at once removes all responsibilities away from such man. Of course, there could be a problem if his thinking power were taken away and still the responsibilities of a sane person were imposed on that man. Also it would be against belief in the Justice of Allāh to say that Satan can manipulate a sane man in such a way that, in spite of his sanity, he sees truth, falsehood and virtue as evil and vice versa.

But there would be no problem if a man's intellect is disturbed or ceases to exist provided the responsibilities of sanity are also removed from him — no matter whether the disturbance occurred through natural causes or through Satan's touch.

Moreover, when we attribute madness to the touch of Satan we do not mean that he confounds the intellect directly without any middle cause. Rather, we believe that natural causes, like nervous disorders and psychological disturbances are the near causes, and Satan is a cause beyond these causes. Likewise, many miracles are attributed to the angels, although there occur natural causes in between. An example of this may be seen in two verses both of which quote Ayyūb (a.s.) beseaching his Lord after his affliction. In one verse he says: *Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment* (38:41); and in the other he says: *Harm has afflicted me and Thou art the Most Merciful of the merciful* (21:83). ''Harm'' here refers to his sickness; and sickness has its own natural causes. See how, in the first verse, he attributes his sickness, caused by natural causes, to Satan.

The root of the trouble is this: When the materialists hear us attributing events to Allāh (or attributing some happenings to the spirit, to an angel or to Satan) they think that it amounts to a rejection of natural causes, and that it sets metaphysical agencies in the place of physical causes. They should be somehow made to understand that by such declarations we add one more (metaphysical) link at the farther end of the chain of (physical) causes. We do not replace the physical causes with metaphysical ones. (We have mentioned this fact in previous discussions several times.)

Fifth: Also, it is wrong to say, as some other exegetists have done, that the similitude aims at describing the state of interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection; and that they will rise from their graves on that day like an epileptic who is afflicted by madness.

Evidently, the verse does not support this meaning. The tradition which describes the condition of interest-takers is about the Day of Resurrection; it does not purport to explain the similitude of this verse.

It is written in *al-Manār* (*Tafsīr*): ''The similitude, that one who swallows interest stands like one who has been confounded by the touch of Satan, has been explained by Ibn 'Aṭiyyah as follows: 'The aim is to

show the likeness of the interest-taker in this world to the one who is confounded and afflicted with epilepsy; as it is said about the man who is convulsed with various involuntary movements, that he has gone mad.'

''I say (the author of *al-Manār*): This is the meaning which comes into my mind on reading this verse. But a major group of commentators have gone against it. They have said: 'The standing mentioned in the verse refers to the rising from the grave at the time of resurrection; that Allāh has made it a sign of the interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection that they shall be raised like epileptics.' They have narrated it from Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd; and aṭ-Ṭabarānī has narrated a tradition of 'Awf ibn Mālik (which he has referred to the Prophet): 'Beware of the sins that shall not be forgiven: embezzlement, so whoever embezzles anything, shall be brought with it on the Day of Resurrection; and interest, so whoever swallows interest shall be raised on the Day of Resurrection as a lunatic who gropes hither and thither aimlessly.' '' (The author of *al-Manār* goes on saying:) ''The commonly under-stood meaning is the one given by Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, because when the word 'standing' is used, one generally understands it to mean managing some affairs; and there is no association to show that it refers to the rising from grave. So far as traditions are concerned none of them is free from one or another defect in the chains of narrators; and those traditions were not revealed together with the Qur'ān, nor does the *al-marfu'* (المَرْفُوعُ = tradition raised to the Prophet) purport to interpret this verse. (It only talks about the condition of interest-takers on the Day of Resurrection, without mentioning this verse.) And had not this tradition been there no-one would have interpreted this verse except in the way Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has done . . . And it was the custom of the forgers of traditons, when they were perplexed by the apparent meaning of a Qur'ānic verse, to forge a tradition to explain it; and there are few exegetical traditions that are really correct.''

He is right when he exposes the mistake of the exegetists. But he himself has gone wrong when he tries to explain the meaning of this similitude. He says: ''What Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has said is quite clear. Those who are entangled in the love of wealth do become its slave. Their whole existence revolves around money; they want wealth for the sake of wealth. They have abandoned the natural means of earning, and have concentrated on earning money through money only. In this way, their

souls deviate from the straight path of moderation on which most of the people are. This immoderation, this loss of equilibrium, shows itself in their movements and actions. Look at the speculators on the stock exchange or compulsive gamblers; the more they indulge in these activities the more they become entangled in it, until a time comes when their behaviour becomes illogical, and their movements disorientated. It is this aspect which is the common factor between their activities and the movements of confounded lunatics. The Arabic word translated as ''has con-founded'' is derived from *al-khabṭ* (الخَبْط) which means disorganized movement.''

The author's comment: To say that the interest-takers' movement become disorientated and disorganized is correct in itself. But interest-taking is not the only cause of such disorientation. This occurs when man forgets that he is a servant of his Creator and Master, and when material pleasure becomes his only goal — and this is the final reach of his knowledge! Then he loses self-control (which come through religion) and sobriety of demeanour. And he gets at once affected by every big or small worldly pleasure; and this results in a disorientation of his movements. It may be observed in any person who is immersed in worldly pleasure, and who has forgotten Allāh, even if he has not taken a single penny as interest all his life.

Nor is that disorientation the purpose of this similitude. The proof, given in the verse, of their being confounded does not fit this supposed purpose of the similitude. Allāh says that they are confounded in their standing, ''because they say, trade is only like interest''. If that disorientation of their behaviour was the purpose of the similitude, it would have been more appropriate to prove it by their disorganized actions and disorderly movements.

Obviously, what we have described in explanation of this simile and about its purpose, is the only reasonable interpretation.

QUR'ĀN: *That is because they say, trade is only like interest:* We have already described why trade was likened to interest, and not interest to trade. A man confounded in his thinking and disorientated in his movements is in an abnormal condition. Good and bad, virtue and evil are both the same to him. If you tell him to leave the bad deed that he is doing and to do the good, he will reply to you — if he replies — that

what you tell him to do is like that which you are forbidding him; that has no preference over this.

Now note the difference. If he had said, ‘‘what you forbid me to do is like that which you tell me to do’’, he could not be said to be confounded or mad. At the most he would have been called a sane person who is mistaken in his view. Why? Because his reply would have shown that he knows that the thing ordered is good and should be done; but he mistakenly thinks that the forbidden thing also is good like the former. In other words, he knows and appreciates the superiority of good actions. He does not think that nothing is good or bad, or that all are equal.

Interest-takers say that trade is like interest. It shows that they have lost their bearings; they do not accept that trade has any superiority over interest. If they had said ‘‘interest is like trade’’, it would have meant that they were not confounded, they knew that trade was a good thing; but they thought that interest too was good like trade. In that case; they could have been called rejectors of the *sharī‘ah* and sinners against Allāh, but not ‘‘confounded like the one touched by Satan’’.

Ponder over the sentence, ‘‘That is because they say, trade is only like interest’’. Apparently they had not spoken these words by their tongues; it was their state and behaviour which was crying out loudly about their thinking. This style of narrating the state as uttered speech is very common in every language.

Once it is understood, the error of the following two interpretations becomes self-evident:

1) Some people have said: The interest-takers said that trade was like interest, because they treated both in a like manner. The reason why they reversed the simile and said, ‘‘trade is like interest’’ was to emphasize — it was as though interest was the main thing and trade a secondary matter which would become respectable if it was likened to interest.

All this is out of place. They did not utter this sentence in words, so that it should require all this explanation.

2) Someone else has said: Maybe the simile is not reversed. They thought that trade was allowed so that one might earn profit. And profit was a certain thing in interest and rather uncertain in other means of earning. Therefore, they gave primacy to interest and assigned a

secondary place to trade.

The same comment applies here as was written about the first.

QUR'ĀN: *And Allāh has allowed trade and forbidden interest:* It is a new sentence. It is not in conjunction with the preceding sentence, and does not show the state of that sentence. In other words, it does not mean: ''they say trade is only like interest, while Allāh has allowed trade and forbidden interest''. If a sentence, beginning with a verb in the past tense, is inserted to denote the state of the preceding sentence, it invariably always begins with *qad* (قَدْ = a prefix, used before past and aorist tenses); for example, ''Zayd came to me'' *wa qad ḍaraba 'Umar* (وَقَدْ ضَرَبَ عُمَرَ = when he had beaten 'Umar). In this verse, the meaning of the preceding sentence does not allow one to say that this sentence is its 'state'. The phrase denoting 'state' restricts the main sentence to the time and state denoted. If we treat this sentence as a phrase of state, it would mean: ''The interest-takers' confoundedness (because of their saying that trade is only like interest) is confined to the time when Allāh allowed trade, and forbade interest''. But the fact is otherwise. They were confounded before this legislation as much as they were after it.

Therefore, this is an independent sentence, and not a phrase of state. Also, this sentence is not the original legislation forbidding interest. As mentioned in the beginning, these verses evidently show that interest was already prohibited before they were revealed. They explain and emphasize what was legislated by the following verse of the third chapter: *O you who believe! do not devour interest making it double and redouble, and fear Allāh, that you may succeed* (3:130).

Therefore, the sentence, ''And Allāh has allowed trade . . .'' does not ordain a new law; it just refers to a previously given order, and paves the way for the next sentence, ''To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, he shall have what has already passed . . .'' This is the apparent meaning of the verse.

Someone has said: The words, ''And Allāh has allowed trade and forbidden interest'' are meant to refute the interest-takers' assertion, ''trade is only like interest''. If their claim were correct, the legal position of trade and interest would not have been different from each other in divine legislation, while the fact is that Allāh has allowed one and forbidden the other.

Reply: The argument mentioned above is correct in itself; but it is not in conformity with the wording of the verse. It could be correct only if this sentence were a phrase of state. But it is not so.

Someone else has written another explanation: The sentence, ‘‘And Allāh has allowed . . .’’, means that the increase of wealth through trade is not like its increase through interest, because ‘‘I have allowed trade and forbidden interest; and order is My order, and creatures are My creatures; I ordain about them as I wish, and make them obey My command in any manner I please; none among them has any right to protest against My decision.’’

Reply: This also is dependent on the wrong theory that this sentence is a phrase of state. Moreover, it is based on a denial of any relationship of cause and effect between religious laws and their benefits. If you accept this interpretation, you will have to reject the relationship of cause and effect in the whole universe, and to attribute every action to Allāh without apparent and middle causes. Evidently such an idea is wrong. Further, this explanation is against the Qur'ānic style. The Qur'ān often explains the reason for a given order, and mentions the general or special benefits emanating from a particular law. Even in the present instance, various sentences hint at the reason upon which this rule is based: ‘‘. . . and forgo what remains (due) from interest if you are believers’’; ‘‘neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly’’; ‘‘Those who swallow down interest . . . trade is only like interest ’’. All these hint at the reason why trade has been allowed: It is in conformity with nature's demand; and why interest has been forbidden. First, it is a deviation from the straight path of life; second, it is not in conformity with belief in Allāh; and third, it is injustice.

QUR'ĀN: To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allāh; and whoever returns (to it) — these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it: These sentences branch out from the preceding sentence, ‘‘And Allāh has allowed trade . . .’’ The principle laid down in this statement is not restricted to interest; it is a general rule although it is mentioned in a particular context. The meaning, therefore, will be as follows: ‘‘What We have told you on the subject of interest, is an admonition; and to whomsoever the admonition comes from his Lord

and he desists, for him shall be what has already passed and his affair rests with Allāh; accordingly, if you now desist from interest, you shall have what you have already taken, and your affair rests with Allāh''.

It is clear from the above explanation that ''the admonition has come'' means ''the information of the law ordained by Allāh has reached''; ''then he desists'' means ''then he repents and desists from the forbidden action''; ''for him shall be what has already passed'' means ''the ordained law shall not be applied retrospectively, rather it shall be enforced from the time the information has reached him''; ''for him shall be what has already passed and his affair rests with Allāh'' means that he shall not be affected by the ever-lasting punishment mentioned in the next sentence (*and whoever returns* [to it] — *these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it*). In this way, they shall be allowed the benefit of their previous action, still their affair is in the hands of Allāh — He may leave them free in some matters, and may sometimes oblige them to make up for the past shortcomings.

This verse needs special attention. Beginning from the words ''to whosoever then the admonition has come'' upto the end of the verse, in spite of the given concession and the severe threatening, a basic principle is explained; it is a general law covering all mortal sins. Yet people have missed this clear point, and have interpreted it as though it were confined to the topic of interest only.

In view of the above-mentioned generality, the words, ''for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allāh'', can be taken only as a general principle — its particulars depending on the nature of the sin concerned. Whoever desists from a sin after receiving the admonition from his Lord, shall be forgiven the sins committed in the past — no matter whether the transgression was against Allāh or against the people. But it does not mean that he shall automatically be absolved from its other consequences. His affair is in the hands of Allāh: He may prescribe for him some expiation or amendment — as, for example, if he neglects prayers, he should pray and make up the arrears; if he did not fast, he should fast the same number of other days; if he took any property unlawfully, he should return it to the lawful owner, and he should undergo the prescribed penal sentences in relevant cases — all this going hand in hand with repentance and desisting from that sin in the

future; and thus the past sins are forgiven. Or, Allāh may forgive the sin altogether, after repentance, without imposing any penalty or expiation — as, for example, when a polytheist repents and enters into Islam, or when a liquor-drinker or a singer repents and desists from these sins. The words, ‘‘To whosoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists’’, are general; they cover all the believers and unbelievers of the Prophet’s time as well as all those who came later or shall come afterwards.

‘‘And whoever returns (to it) — these are the inmates of the Fire; they shall abide in it’’: The word, ‘‘returns’’ here is in contrast to the word, ‘‘desists’’, in the preceding sentence. There-fore, it means, ‘‘does not desist’’. Thus, it refers to the person who goes on committing that sin and does not accept the divine command. Such an attitude exposes the infidelity or apostasy that is hidden in his heart even if he does not utter a single word to show it. Whoever returns to a sin and does not desist from it, and does not even feel ashamed of it, has in fact not submitted to the command of Allāh; and he shall never succeed. Thus the two sides mentioned in this verse are: (1) accepting and obeying the divine command which creates the resolve that one will not go against the law; (2) continuing in the sin which proves that one has not accepted that divine command, which, in its turn, makes one liable to remain in the Fire for ever.

The Mu‘tazilites offer this verse as a proof of their belief that the one who commits a major sin shall remain in the Fire forever.

The author’s comment: No doubt that the verse shows that not only the one who commits a major sin, but anyone who commits any sin, shall remain in chastisement for ever. But it is conditional; it refers to only that sinner who commits a sin and does not accept the divine command. And such a person will admittedly abide in the Fire. But it is different from the view of the Mu‘tazilites.

Other commentators have mentioned many possibilities and explanations about the words of Allāh, ‘‘for him shall be what has already passed’’, ‘‘his affair rests with Allāh’’, and ‘‘whoever returns . . .’’ But all those discussions are based on their erroneous understanding of the verse (as we have explained earlier). It is not worthwhile mentioning them here, since their very basis is wrong.

QUR'ĀN: *Allāh effaces interest, and causes charities to grow. . . .:* *''al-Maḥq''* (المَحْقُ) is gradual decrease and deterioration leading to extinction; *''al-irbā' ''* (الإرْبَآءُ) is to make grow; *''al-athim''* (الأثِيْمُ) is the sinner. The verse contrasts the growing of charities with the effacement of interest. It has been described earlier how the growing and multiplication of charities is not confined to the hereafter; it is its general characteristic which is found in this world as well as in the hereafter. Therefore, effacement and obliteration of interest must also be common to this world and the hereafter.

It is the characteristic of charity that it grows and grows, necessarily and inevitably. It spreads love, propagates mercy, creates good accord, unites hearts and brings peace and security in society; it protects the psyche from evil thoughts and anger. The members of such a society never think to usurp other's property, or to take it openly by force, or stealthily by theft, and so forth. Charity leads them to unity, co-operation and mutual help. As a result, most of the ways in which property can deteriorate become closed; and it helps in making property grow, and grow many times.

On the other hand, it is the characteristic of interest that it gradually obliterates and destroys wealth. It spreads hard-heartedness and cruelty, creates enmity and distrust, destroys peace and security and incites the ''have nots'' to take revenge from the ''haves'' in any possible way — be it by talk or by action, be it directly or indirectly; in short, it leads towards disunity and discord. As a result, most of the ways of deterioration and destruction of the property are opened; and wealth becomes a target misfortune and calamity.

These two items — charity and interest — have a direct impact on the life of the poor section of society. Needless to say, poverty and need inflame their feelings, and they are provoked to defend their rights and are ready to confront the others, come what may. With this background, if society treats them with kindness and does good to them without asking for anything in exchange, their noble feelings are stirred and they welcome this generosity with goodwill and brotherly feelings; and it creates loving effects. If, on the other hand, they are treated with hard-heartedness and greed, and are faced with danger to their property, honour and life, they stand up to take their revenge from their oppressors in any possible way.

Those who have seen and heard about those who swallow interest know that such people seldom escape the evil effects of such confrontation. Often their properties are lost, their houses are ruined and their endeavours go in vain.

It is necessary to mention here two things:

First: The causes upon which social effects are based differ from physical and creative causes in one important aspect. While the perfect physical and creative causes can never fail to produce their effects, social factors and causes bring about the expected result in most, but not all, cases. We deal with someone in a certain manner and expect those results which appear in the wake of that behaviour — in most cases.

If we ponder upon the Qur'ānic verses which describe the benefits and harms of the given actions, we shall find that the Qur'ān (when it shows the relation between actions and their causes, and between actions and their effects) has adopted this very system, and mentions a frequently recurring effect as an ever-recurring one.

Second: Society is like an individual in its various conditions and states. An individual is born, lives, dies, acts and leaves his footprints on the sand of life. Likewise, a society has its own birth, life, death, actions and effects. Allāh says in the Qur'ān: *And never did We destroy a town but it had a fixed-term. No people can hasten on their doom nor can they postpone* (it) (15:4 — 5)

But an individual's life and death are different from a society's, as are the effects of their respective activities.

Now, if an individual's characteristic spreads to the whole of society, the ways of its existence and extinction, as well as its effects will change considerably. Let us look, for example, at chastity and licentiousness. They have an effect on life, when they are found in an individual. People generally look down upon a profligate man, they do not like to set up marriage with him; his company is avoided and he is not trusted. It all happens when it remains an individual's vice, and if society on the whole is free from this evil. But if this debauchery spreads in society, and people become used to it, the above-mentioned effects simply vanish away. Those effects were the product of general abhorance and common distaste of this evil; when it spreads to the whole of society, that abhorance and distaste give way to general

acceptance. In this way, this effect of an individual's immorality ceases to exist when that immorality spreads to the whole of society. Yet its other evil effects will surely follow: venereal disease will spread, reproduction will be effected; and other undesirable social evils would increase — for example, natural affinities will be destroyed and relationships will be upset.

Also, the effects of a characteristic found in an individual are felt very soon, while those of the same characteristic found in a society take a longer time to appear.

Allāh effaces interest and makes charities grow. But there is a difference between an individual taking interest and a society doing so. When an individual indulges in this sin, the interest almost always destroys him; few and far between are the cases in which an interest-taker, because of some other mitigating factors, escapes this punishment. But retaliation is not so swift in case of a society wallowing in interest. Look at today's world: interest is a recognized institution of all societies and governments; the economy is founded, and laws are made, on the foundation of interest, and it is interest that is the corner-stone of banking. Now some of the evil effects mentioned above may not happen in this case, because society has adopted it and people never pause to think about its evils and wickedness. Yet, its natural results must follow: the accumulation of wealth on one side, and an all-pervasive need on the other. Complete separation of, and confrontation between, the two — the have and have-nots — have already appeared; and its ill effects are already darkening the world's atmosphere. This has taken longer to appear than in case of an individual; yet judging from the life-span of society it has appeared rather soon. The life of society is different from an individual's; and a day for society may be equal to an aeon in the eyes of an individual. Allāh says: *and We bring these days to men by turns* (3:140). This ''day'' refers to the time when people stand against people, nations against nations, governments confronting governments, and states opposing states.

It is necessary that man's bliss be always cared for, be it of an individual, of society or of the whole of humanity. The Qur'ān looks after both types of bliss — of an individual as well as of the whole of mankind. It was sent down to manage the man's affairs, and to safeguard

the world's happiness and felicity — of the individual as well as of the species, in the present day as well as in the time to come.

Let us now look at the words of Allāh: ''Allāh effaces interest and He causes charities to grow''. These sentences describe the ultimate state of these two activities — whether done by individuals or by society. Effacement is the inseparable characteristic of interest, as growth is that of charity. Interest is effaced, although it is named *ar-ribā* (الرِّبَا = growth); and charity continuously grows, although it is not called by any such name. And to this reality Allāh draws our attention in these words: ''Allāh effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow''; thus He attributes ''growth'' to charities of all kinds, and describes interest *ar-ribā* (literally, growth) in a word, effacement, which is its opposite in meaning.

After this explanation, the weakness of the following interpretations of other exegetists becomes obvious:

1) Someone has written: the effacement of interest does not mean that such money is lost or that such endeavours do not succeed. Because experience proves otherwise. What is actually meant by the sentence ''Allāh effaces interest'' is that Allāh deprives the interest-taker from the main objective of this activity. The interest-taker aims at hoarding wealth through interest so that he may enjoy a good life; but he never gets a chance to rejoice in his wealth, as he remains too busy in adding money to money. Then he has to remain on guard against defaulters; and ultimately he passes his days in disappointment when he finds that he has become unpopular and is especially hated by the poor.

The weakness of this interpretation is obvious.

2) Other exegetists have said: The frame of reference for this effacement is the life hereafter. The one who takes interest neglects many good deeds because of his involvement in interest; and his many acts of worship are nullified because he uses money gained by interest in them.

The author's comment: No doubt, this xplanation gives examples of effacement. But effacement is not restricted to the life hereafter.

3) The Mu'tazilites attempt to prove from the words, ''and whoever returns (to it) — these are the inmates of the Fire; they shall abide in it '', that one who commits a major sin shall remain in Hell for ever.

We have already shown the defect of this argument, and described

the true import of this sentence.

QUR'ĀN: *And Allāh does not love any ungrateful sinner: ''al-Kaffār''* (الكَفَّارُ) translated here as ''ungrateful'' is on a paradigm which is used for emphasis. Thus, it means, ''inveterately ungrateful''; ''abstinately unbelieving''.

This sentence gives the main reason of the effacement of interest. The swallower of interest shows his obstinacy and ingratitude for the countless bounties of Allāh. He puts obstructions in the natural path of human life, that is, in natural modes of dealing; he rejects a major part of the rules about worship and mutual dealings; he uses the unlawful money of interest for his food, drink, clothing and housing, and in this way nullifies most of his acts of worship. Also, by using that money in his commercial transactions, he invalidates most of his dealings and usurps others' property, and the liability for such things remains on his own head. Further, he tramples ethical values under foot, remains immersed in greed and avarice, becomes hard-hearted and uses force and coercion to collect from his debtors what he thinks is his due. In this way, all his faculties and actions are submerged in disbelief and ingratitude. And also he is *''athīm''* (أثِيْمُ), that is, sin is ingrained in his nature. And Allāh does not love him, because He does not love anyone sunk in ingratitude, sin and disbelief.

QUR'ĀN: *Surely they who believe . . . nor shall they grieve:* It is a general principle — those who believe and obey the divine law, ''they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve ''. This general rule fits those who spend in charities and desist from swallowing interest, which Allāh has forbidden.

QUR'ĀN: *O you who believe! fear Allāh and forgo what remains* (due) *from interest, if you are believers:* The verse addresses them with their attribute of belief and faith, and then reminds them to fear Allāh. It prepares the ground for the order which follows, ''and forgo what remains (due). from interest ''. It shows that when these verses were revealed, there were some believers who indulged in this sin and their debtors still owned them some interest payments. Therefore, Allāh ordered them to forgo that amount. This order was followed by the threat ''But if you do (it) not, then be apprised of war from Allāh and His Apostle''.

It supports the tradition (to be quoted later) which gives the reason why these verses were revealed.

The verse ends on the words, ''if you are believers''. This shows that desisting from interest is an inseparable characteristic of belief. It puts more emphasis on the preceding sentences: ''and whoever returns (to it) — these are the inmates of the Fire . . .'', and ''Allāh does not love any ungrateful (unbeliever) sinner''.

QUR'ĀN: *But if you do* (it) *not, then he apprised of war from Allāh and His Apostle: ''al-Idhn''* (الاِذْنُ) means to know. *''Fa'dhanu''* (فأْذَنُوْا = be apprised, know) has also been recited as *fa'ādhinu* (فَأَذِنُوْا = announce) imperative mood of *al-'īdhān* (الاِيْذَانُ = to announce). The preposition ''*bi''* (بِ) in *''biḥarbin''* (بِحَرْبٍ = of war) gives the meaning of certainty. The meaning thus shall be: Be sure of war from Allāh and His Apostle. ''War'' is used as a common noun, to hint that it shall be a great war, or to refer to various kinds of war. The war is attributed to Allāh and His Apostle because it is in connection with a law which was legislated by Allāh and promulgated by His Apostle. Had it been connected with Allāh only, it would have been a creative decree. So far as His Apostle is concerned, he is not independent of Allāh in any affair; Allāh says: *you have no concern in the affair* (3:128).

How do Allāh and His Apostle wage war with one who does not obey a law? They fight with such a disobedient Muslim to compel him to submit to divine authority, as is declared in the Qur'ān: . . . *then fight that* (party) *which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allāh's command* (49:9).

Moreover, Allāh has another way of defending His laws; and that is fighting against the offenders through the agency of nature. He lets the masses flare up against them; and in this way their lands are devastated and their footprints obliterated. Allāh says: *And when We wish to destroy a town, We send Our commandment to the people of it who lead easy lives, but they transgress therein; thus the word proves true against it, so We destroy it with utter destruction* (17:16).

QUR'ĀN: *And if* (the debtor) *is in staitened circumstances, then let there be respite until* (he is in) *ease: ''Kāna''* (كَانَ = is) in the beginning of the verse has not been used as an auxiliary verb; it is an independent verb and means ''exists''; *''an-naẓirah''* (النَّظِرَةُ) is respite, a

moratorium. *''al-Maysarah''* (المَيْسَرَةُ) is ease, affluence; it is the opposite of *''al-'usrah''* (العُسْرَةُ = straitened circumstances).

The verse says: If there is one of your debtors who is at present unable to repay your loan, then give him respite until he is affluent enough to repay it.

The verse is general and not restricted to the loan given with interest, although it covers such cases also. They used to demand repayment when the stipulated time came; if the debtor was not in a position to pay, he asked for some more time, agreeing to pay more interest. The verse forbids this interest, and tells the creditor to give his debtor respite until he is in ease.

QUR'ĀN: *and that you remit* (it) *as alms is better for you, if you knew:* If you forgo the loan and remit it as charity, it shall be better for you; because by this remittance you will change into charity what you intended to increase through interest; in other words, you will change what was sure to be effaced with what is sure to grow many times.

QUR'ĀN: *And fear the day . . . and they shall not be dealt with unjustly:* This is the epilogue of the preceding verses of interest; it reminds the believers of the Day of Resurrection, and mentions some of its aspects which are relevant to this topic. The verse prepares the audience to fear Allāh and desist from the things forbidden by Allāh, especially concerning the people's rights upon which whole edifice of life is founded. It says that a day is coming in which you shall be returned to Allāh and then every soul shall be paid back in full what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.

What is the meaning of being returned to Allāh while we are never far from Him? And what is this ''paying back in full''? We shall explain it, God willing, in the sixth chapter (The Cattle).

It has been said that this verse was the last one to be revealed to the Apostle of Allāh (s.a.w.a.). A tradition to this effect will be found in the following discussion.

TRADITIONS

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī, under the verse:

‘‘Those who swallow down interest . . .’’, that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘‘When I was taken to the heavens, I saw such a group that if any of them wanted to stand up, he could not do so, because of the bulkiness of his stomach. I said: ‘Who are they, O Gabriel?’ He said: ‘These are they who swallow up interest; they cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with (his) touch stands; and lo! they are on the path of the people of Pharaoh; they are exposed to the Fire in morning and at night, and they say: ‘‘Our Lord ! when shall the Hour come?’’ ’ ’’

The author says: It is an illustrative example pertaining to the period between death and resurrection. It confirms the Prophet’s words: ‘‘As you live, so shall you die; and as you die, so shall you be raised.’’

al-Isbahānī has narrated, in his *at-Targhīb,* from Anas (ibn Mālik) that he said: ‘‘The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) said: ‘The swallower of interest shall come on the Day of Resurrection, confounded, dragging both his sides.’ Saying it, he recited: *they cannot stand except as one whom Satan has confounded with* (his) *touch stands.’’* (*ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*)

The author says: There have come numerous traditions about the punishment for interest, both from Shī‘ah and Sunnī chains. Some of them say that interest is equal to seventy acts of incest the swallower of interest would have committed with his mother.

There is a tradition in *at-Tahdhīb* that ‘Umar ibn Yazīd Bayyā‘ as-Sābirī said: ‘‘I said to Abū ‘Abdillāh (a.s.): ‘May I be your ransom! Verily, people say that taking profit from a ‘‘needy’’ person is unlawful.’ He said: ‘Have you seen anyone, whether rich or poor, purchasing anything unless he ‘‘needs’’ it? O ‘Umar! Allāh has allowed trade and forbidden interest. Therefore, take profit; but do not take interest.’ I said: ‘And what is interest?’ He said: ‘Dirhams by dirhams, two against one; and wheat by wheat, double (weight) against single (weight).’ ’’

‘Ubayd ibn Zurārah narrates from Abū ‘Abdillāh (a.s.) that he said: ‘‘There is no interest except in that which is measured or weighed.’’ (*Man lā yaḥḍuruhu ’l-faqīh*)

The author says: There is a difference of opinion as to which things are liable to interest. It is the *madhhab* of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (a.s.) that there is no interest except in gold and silver and those things which are measured

or weighed. Further details are beyond the scope of this book, as the topic concerns Islamic jurisprudence.

There is a tradition in *al-Kāfī* from one of the two Imāms (al-Bāqir or aṣ-Sādiq - a.s.) and in *at-Tafsīr* of al-'Ayyāshī from aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) about the words of Allāh: *To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord,* that he said: ''The admonition is repentance.''

Muḥammad ibn Muslim said: ''There came to Abū 'Abdillāh (a.s.) a man from Khurāsān who had dealth with interest till he had amassed a fortune. 'He asked the scholars of jurisprudence, and they said: No deed of yours shall be accepted until you return it (the interest) to its owners.' Then he came to Abū Ja'far (a.s.) and told him his story. Abū Ja'far (a.s.) said: 'Your way out is the verse from the Book of Allāh, Mighty and Great is He ! *To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, for him shall be what has already passed, and his affair rests with Allāh*'. Then he (the Imām) said: 'Admonition is repentance.' '' (*at-Tahdhīb*)

There is a tradition in *al-Kāfī* and *Man lā yaḥduruhu 'l-faqīh* that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''Every interest which people swallowed because of ignorance, and then they repented, it shall be accepted from them when the repentance is known from them.'' And he said: ''If a man inherits a property from his father, and he knows that that property includes interest, but it is mixed up with (the money of) trade, then it is lawful for him; so let him consume it. And if he recognizes something of it (interest) then he should keep his principal and return the excess.''

A tradition is narrated in *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh* and *'Uyūnu 'l-akhbār* from ar-Riḍā (a.s.): ''It (interest) is a major sin, after explanation.'' And he said: ''And to treat it as a small matter is to enter into disbelief.''

The Imām was asked about a man who consumes interest thinking that it is lawful. He said: ''There is no harm for him in it until he takes it on purpose (i.e. knowing that it is unlawful). When he indulges in it on purpose, then he shall be (liable) to the place which Allāh has mentioned.'' (*al-Kāfī*)

It is reported in *al-Kāfī* and *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh* that aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) was asked about the words of Allāh: *Allāh effaces interest, and He causes charities to grow. . . ,* and was told (by the asker): ''I have seen

(many a man) who swallows interest and his wealth increases.'' He (the Imām) said: ''What effacement could be more effective than that of the dirham of interest? It obliterates religion; and if he repented, his wealth would go and he would become poor.''

The author says: The tradition, as you see, explains effacement in terms of religious obliteration — he does not become owner of that property and he is not allowed to use it. Charity is just its opposite in these respects. This tradition does not go against the general meaning of effacement which we have written earlier.

'Alī (a.s.) said: ''The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) has cursed five persons concerned with interest: the one who consumes (i.e. takes) it, the one who gives it to be consumed, its two witnesses and its writer.'' (*Majma'u 'l-bayān*)

The author says: The same thing has been narrated in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from the Holy Prophet through several chains.

There is a tradition in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Ayyāshī from al-Bāqir (a.s.) that he said: ''Allāh, High is He, has said: 'I have given (some) authority to others (i.e. angels etc.) about things, except charity, because I take hold of it with My (own) hand. So much so that a man or a woman gives half a date in alms, and I nurture it for him as one of you nurtures his calf and colt; until I shall leave (i.e., return) it on the Day of Resurrection (and it shall be) bigger than the (mountain) of Uḥud.' ''

The same book quotes 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (peace be on them both) narrating from the Prophet that he said: ''Verily, Allāh nurtures the alms for one of you, as one of you brings up his child; until he (the alms-giver) shall find it on the Day of Resurrection, and it shall be like Uḥud.''

The author says: The matter has been narrated also through a Sunnī chain from many companions like Abū Hurayrah, 'Ā'ishah, Ibn 'Umar, Abū Barzah al-Aslamī, all from the Prophet.

It is written in *at-Tafsīr* of al-Qummī that when Allāh sent down (the verse): *Those who swallow down interest . . . ,* Khālid ibn al-Walīd stood up before the Messenger of Allāh and said: ''O Messenger of Allāh! My father lent (money) with interest in the (tribe of) Thaqīf, and he told me at the time of his death to collect it. Thereupon Allāh revealed: *O you who believe! fear Allāh and forgo what remains* (due)

from it. . .''

The author says: Nearly the same thing has been narrated in *Majma'u 'l-bayān* from al-Bāqir (a.s.)

as-Suddī and 'Ikrimah have said: (This verse) was revealed about the balance of interest due to al-'Abbās and Khālid ibn al-Walīd; they were partners in pre-Islamic days, they lent with interest to some people of Banū 'Amr ibn 'Umayr, a clan of the (tribe of) Thaqīf. Then came Islam, and they had great riches in interest. Thereupon, Allāh revealed this verse. So the Prophet said: ''Now, surely every interest of the pre-Islamic days is waived, and the first interest which I waive is that of al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib; and all the blood of pre-Islamic days is waived, and the first blood which I waive is that of Rabī'ah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib'' (He was given to Banū Layth for suckling and was killed by Banū Hudhayl.) (*Majma'u 'l-bayān*)

The author says: This has been narrated in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* from Ibn Jarīr, Ibnu 'l-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from as-Suddī. But there the name of Khālid is not mentioned openly. It says that it was revealed about al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and a man from Banū al-Mughīrah.

Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī (who has said that it is correct), an-Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Bayhaqī (in his *as-Sunan*) have narrated from 'Amr ibn al-Aḥwaṣ that he participated in the last pilgrimage with the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.); so he (the Messenger of Allāh) said: ''Now surely every interest of the days of ignorance is waived, you shall have your capital, neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly.'' (*ad-Durru 'l-manthūr*)

The author says: There are numerous traditions with a similar meaning. What is deduced from Shī'ah and Sunnī traditions is that the verse was revealed about some interest money which Banū al-Mughīrah had due from Thaqīf; and they used to lend money to them with interest in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. When Islam came, Banū al-Mughīrah demanded from Thaqīf the balance which was due; they refused to pay (interest) because Islam had waived it. Their case was put before the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.); then this verse was revealed.

It supports what we have mentioned in the General Comment that interest was prohibited in Islam long before these verses were revealed;

and that the aim of these verses was to emphasize that prohibition.

With this background, those few traditions which say that the law prohibiting interest was revealed in the last days of the Apostle of Allāh, and that he died before he could explain the rules concerning interest are not worthy of interest. Such traditions are reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr,* through Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Marduwayh from 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab that he said in a lecture ''Among the last verses to be revealed was that of interest; and the Apostle of Allāh died and he had not explained it to us. Therefore, leave what seems doubtful to you for what is not doubtful to you.''

Moreover, it is the *madhhab* of the Imāms of *Ahlu 'l-bayt* that Allāh did not give death to His Prophet until He had legislated all that was needed by people for their religious affairs, and until His Prophet had explained it all to his people.

It is reported in *ad-Durru 'l-manthūr* through several chains from Ibn 'Abbās, as-Suddī, 'Atiyyah al-'Awfī, Abū Ṣāliḥ and Sa'īd ibn Jubayr that the last verse to be revealed was: *And fear the day in which . . . shall not be dealt with unjustly.*

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''Much stress was laid on the prohibition of interest so that people should not refrain from doing good through loan or charity.'' (*Majma'u 'l-bayān*)

The same book narrates from 'Alī (a.s.): ''When Allāh intends to destroy a town, interest appears among them.''

The author says: The earlier comments make the meanings of these traditions clear.

The author of *Majma'u 'l-bayān* writes under the verse, ''And if (the debtor) is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until (he is in) ease'': ''There is a difference of opinion regarding the definition of straitened circumstances. And it has been narrated from Abū 'Abdillāh (a.s.) that he said: 'It is when he does not have anything in excess of his own sustenance and that of his dependants, in the sense of economics.' . . . to give respite to a poor man is compulsory in every religion, as is narrated from Ibn 'Abbās, aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk and al-Ḥasan; and similar traditions have come from Abū Ja'far and Abū 'Abdillāh (peace be upon them both). al-Bāqir (a.s.) said: 'Until (he is in) ease', means, until his report reaches the Imam; then the Imām shall repay (on his behalf) out of

the share of 'those in debt', provided he had spent that loan on lawful expenses.''

aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: ''The Messenger of Allāh ascended the pulpit one day; he thanked Allāh and praised Him and asked for His blessings on His prophets, and then said: 'O people! he who is present should convey (it) to him who is absent. Now, whoever gives respite to a poor person, Allāh shall credit him every day with charity equal to his money (given in loan), until he recovers it.' '' Then Abū 'Abdillāh (aṣ-Ṣādiq - a.s.) said: *''And if* (the debtor) *is in straitened circumstances, then let there be respite until* (he is in) *ease; and that you remit* (it) *as alms is better for you, if you knew* that he is in straitened circumstances, then give him your money (principle) as alms, as it is better for you.'' (*al-Kāfī*)

The author says: This tradition explains the divine words ''if you knew''; and its other meaning has been mentioned earlier. The tradition on this and related subjects are very numerous; and the reader is advised to refer to the chapters concerning loans in the books of Islamic jurisprudence.

ABOUT INTEREST

It has been repeatedly mentioned that man has only one aim in sight when he does any work. That aim is to gain perfection in his life; in other words, to fulfil his physical and material needs. He does a work and obtains the necessities of life. Thus, he is the rightful owner of his work and of the things made by him. The word ''work'' is used here with a comprehensive meaning; it includes his actions and reactions as well as every relationship with other things which produces an effect on them, and which society acknowledges. He acquires and reserves for himself what effect he has produced on a matter, and believes that it is his lawful property; the sane persons of society also accept his owner-ship of that item.

But it was not possible for him to fulfil all his needs by his own labour. This led to mutual co-operation in society; it became inevitable for one to benefit from others' endeavours. This resulted in the mutual

exchange of properties. It became customary that a man worked in one or a more vocations, and produced many necessary items, then kept for himself according to his needs, and exchanged the excess items for what he needed from another man's products. This was the foundation of mutual dealing and barter.

Now, it was found that most of the products and items were totally different from each other; many were of completely different species; some were in great demand while others were not needed so frequently; one thing was found in large quantity while the other was rare, and so on. This created difficulties in bartering. Fruit is used for eating, a donkey for carrying loads, water for satisfying the thirst, and pearls and gems for jewelry, and so on. All these things have different values as necessities of life, and are totally unrelated to each other. How can they be exchanged with justice and fairness?

Thus arose the need to fix the value of a thing in terms of money. They took a rare item, like gold, and turned it into a standard by which the value of other products and goods could be decided. They also fixed units of length, mass and weight, for example, the metre, the litre and the kilogram to measure and weigh goods. In this way, confusion and complication was removed, and the worth of a thing in relation to other things could be decided by comparing both with gold. Let us say that a carat of diamond is equal to four dinars, and a certain heap of wheat flour is equal to one-tenth of a dinar. Now we can easily decide that a carat of diamond is equal to forty such heaps of wheat flour.

Gradually, it was found more practicable to make coins of some other metals also, like siliver, copper, bronze and nickel; finally currency notes made of paper came into being. The details about this may be found in books on economics.

Now the road of trade and commerce was open. Some people took for themselves the occupation of keeping various commodities with them and exchanging them for money or other goods. Their purpose was to earn profit by this exchange. The profit represented the extra price obtained from the customer for the goods sold.

Then a time came when people began treating money as though it was all that was needed for life. The price almost usurped the place of the commodity itself. It was because by acquiring money man could acquire

all the necessities of life.

Some people treated it as a commodity to be sold and purchased. These people are called money-changers. They change foreign and local currencies and earn profit by this transaction.

This is an outline of the story of trade and money. It will be seen from above that its basic element is bartering one thing for another, because someone needed one thing more than another; or exchanging an item for its price, because one needs the profit. In all these cases, the thing given is always different from the thing received in exchange. It is this difference upon which commercial life is based.

So far as exchanging a commodity for the same type of commodity (e.g. wheat for wheat) is concerned, it could be either without any increase or with increase. If it is without increase (e.g. lending money or food grain and taking it back without any increase), then it is a reasonable dealing, which sometimes becomes necessary; it corrects the imbalance of society, fulfils the needs of the poor, and no harm comes out of it. But if it is with increase on the side of repayment, then it is interest. Now, let us see what its effect can be.

The basic element of interest is the exchange of one commodity for the same commodity with an increase in repayment; for example, lending ten dirhams for a fixed time and taking back twelve dirhams; or selling an item on credit at ten dirhams and recovering twelve at the end of the stipulated term. Why does a buyer or debtor take any money or commodity on loan? Because his needs are greater than his earnings. Let us say that he earns ten dirhams daily, while his necessities cost him twenty. He is obliged on the first day to take a loan of ten dirhams, with interest of two dirhams. On the second day, he has to pay two dirhams of interest from his earnings of ten; now he is left with eight dirhams only, so he has to take another loan of twelve dirhams with larger interest. This is the beginning of his ruin. Day by day, ever larger portions of his earnings go in paying ever-increasing interest, until a day comes when the interest eats up his total earnings; he pays ten in interest and is left without a single dirham to meet his needs. It is sheer destruction of life and livelihood.

And the lender gets back his own ten, plus the ten of the debtor; he gets the whole twenty. The wealth of both sides accumulates on one side,

while the other side is left in the lurch with-out any money.[1]

In this way, interest leads to the destruction of the poor section of society, and all wealth gravitates towards the already wealthy group. Because of this financial strength, they become arrogant, they manipulate the money market, and rule over people's properties, honour and lives in any way they wish and desire (exploitation of others is, after all, ingrained in human nature). On the other hand, the deprived and exploited people try their best to protect themselves from this humiliation, and to free themselves from the domination and exploitation by wealthy persons; they use all means of defence and offence available to them. As a result of this confrontation, chaos appears on the earth, and disorder and violence spread in society. Humanity races towards extinction and civilization towards obliteration.

This is apart from the periodic loss of capital — not every debtor is able, or willing, to pay the accumulated principal plus interest.

This much about loans which rich people give to poor persons. In other cases of interest, for example, commercial loans given by banks to traders to increase their trade, the defects are not so transparent. But their least harm. is that they gradually pull wealth to those trading houses by increasing their capital far in excess of their actual capacity and strength. Then those commercial concerns try to compete with each other; the more powerful ones, swallow up the weaker ones. In this manner, weaker traders go out of business; the list of needy persons becomes longer and longer; and wealth concentrates in a few houses.

The scholars of economics must admit that the only reason why communism was started, and why socialism spread so much, was the preposterous and exorbitant accumulation of wealth withint a few houses,

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[1] This is now happening on a much larger scale in dealings between developed and developing nations. The former started giving interest-bearing loans to the latter, to ''help'' them out of their troubles. (Of course, this ''generosity'' had many strings attached to it; but that is not our concern here.) Every poor nation fell into this trap. Many such loans accumulated; and after a short respite the interest on them began falling due in rapid succession. Many nations, unable to meet their obligations, took further loans to repay the interest due. It is an open secret that many a poor nation has already been swallowed up to its neck in this quicksand.

while the overwhelming majority was deprived of the bare necessities of life. The reader should be made aware of an interesting phenomenon. The wealthy minority always swore in the name of civilization, justice and freedom; they preached equality and human rights. They said with their mouths what was not in their hearts. They used words for totally opposite ideas. By this method, they hoped to keep the common people, the exploited masses, in their place, to keep them lulled in their servitude, so that they might go on oppressing them more and more. But very soon it boomeranged back to them; the cunning phrases of the exploiters came back to haunt them; they planned, and Allāh also planned, and Allāh is the best of planners; thus evil was the end of those who did evil.

And only Allāh knows what the future holds for this troubled humanity.

Another evil effect of interest springs from the facility it provides for accumulating wealth in the hands of a few. Huge amounts of money, in millions and billions, are kept idle in the strong rooms of banks. Some people enjoy extravagant living and inexhaustible luxuries, idling their times on the thrones of their financial empires; at the same time, there are others who spend their lives in idleness, but for a totally different reason; these hungry masses remain idle, because they are unemployed. One group does not work because of its superabundant treasures; the other group does not work because it is deprived of employment. Both become idle — an affront to human nature which says that man must work for his livelihood.

ANOTHER DISCOURSE ABOUT INTEREST

al-Ghazālī has written in his *Iḥyā'u 'l-'ulūm* (chapter of ''Thanks'') as follows:

''One of the bounties of Allāh is the creation of the dirham and the dīnār; and the world cannot do without them. They are two metals, which are of no use in themselves; still mankind depends upon them. Every man needs a multitude of items like food, clothing and various other necessities. Sometimes he does not have what he needs, and has in his hands what is not needed by him. For example, he has in his possession a

quantity of saffron, but he is in need of a camel to ride. And someone else has a camel which he has no use of, and he needs saffron. Both should exchange their properties. But it is necessary to estimate the worth of the things so changed. Naturally, the owner of the camel will not give away his camel in lieu of a small quantity of saffron. And there is no correlation between camel and saffron, so that it can be said that the camel owner should be given saffron, for example, equal in weight to the camel. The same difficulty would arise if one wanted to purchase a house with cloth, or flour with a donkey. These things have no correlation with each other. Exchange would be extremely difficult in this way.

‘‘These unrelated and dissimilar items neeed an intermediary who can decide between them with justice, and can fix each item’s place, worth and rank. By this assignment of ranks, it would be known which things are equal and which are unequal.

‘‘Accordingly, Allāh created the dirham and the dinar as two judges for, and intermediaries between, properties, so that properties might be measured by them. Now, it can be said that this camel is worth one hundred dīnārs, and this much saffron is equal to one hundred dīnārs, therefore, this camel is equal in value to this amount of saffron.

‘‘This comparison by means of the two metals is possible because they are not wanted in themselves. If they, like other commodities, were wanted in themselves, somebody would have needed them and another could have refused to accept them if he had no use of them at that actual time. And the whole system would have been disturbed. Therefore, Allāh created them to circulate in the hands of people, and to decide between properties with justice.

‘‘There was also another benefit: One may acquire all things through the dirham and the dīnār. It is because they are precious items in themselves, and they are of no use in themselves. Their relationship with all other commodities is the same. Therefore, for anyone who owns them, it is as though he owns everything. This benefit is not found in other thing. A man who owns a cloth has only that cloth; if he needs food, he cannot be sure that the owner of the food will accept his cloth in exchange; perhaps that man needs a horse; why should he take cloth? Hence the need of a thing which in appearance is nothing, and in reality is everything.

''Only that thing which has no particular form of its own can have an equal relation to various different things. A mirror has no colour of its own, therefore it reflects every colour which comes before it; prepositions have no independent meaning of their own, so they make other words' meanings clear. Likewise coins serve no purpose on their own, that is why all purposes are served through them. This is the second benefit; there are other benefits also; but they are not mentioned *here* for the sake of brevity.''

After this al-Ghazālī expresses his views, the gist of which is as follows:

''As these two coins are the bounties of Allāh (because of the benefits mentioned above) anyone who uses them in a way that nullifies their originally intended benefits is guilty of ingratitude against the bounties of Allāh.''

After this, he infers the reasons for many laws from his above-mentioned principle:

According to him ''it is because of this principle that the hoarding of the dirham and the dīnār is prohibited, as this is injustice and nullifies their benefit. Hoarding them is like putting a judge in prison — it prevents him from discharging his duties, and creates disorder in society.''

He also says: ''It is because of this reason that one is not allowed to make or use pots of gold or silver. Using them as pots turns them into things that are wanted for their own sake, while they have been created only as a means to acquire other things. This also is injustice; it is like forcing a judge to work as a weaver, to collect levies or to do other such jobs which are done by lowly people.''

And he has justified the prohibition of interest in the dirham and the dīnār by the same principle. According to him, it is injustice and ingratitude against the bounties of Allāh, because gold and silver have been created for the sake of other things, not for their own, as there is no need which can be fulfilled by gold and silver in the same way as gold and silver.

This was, in short, al-Ghazālī's explanation. But he seems confused in his principle, as well as in the reasons by which he has inferred various rules from that principle.

First: He says that gold and silver are not sought for their own sake. If so, then how could they determine the value of other things? The hand is used to measure the lengths of things. How is that done? By the length of the hand itself. A piece of iron is used to determine the weight of a thing. How is it done? By the weight of the iron itself. If gold and silver were unwanted in themselves, how could they decide the worth, that is, ‘‘wantedness’’, of other things?

Further, he admits that they are precious items in themselves. How can they be precious in themselves unless they are wanted for their own sake? How can a thing be called ‘‘precious’’ if it is not wanted?

Moreover, if they were created only as a means to acquire other things, then there should be no difference between gold and silver in worth and prestige. But the fact is otherwise. According to al-Ghazālī’s principle, both metals should be equal in value!

Second: The reason why the hoarding of gold and silver is prohibited is not that which al-Ghazālī has thought — that a hoarder treats them as though they were wanted for their own sake. The real reason has been mentioned in the words of Allāh: *And* (as for) *those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allāh’s way, announce to them a painful chastisement* (9:34). It is clear that their hoarding is prohibited because it deprives the poor of their dues; and also because they are needed for keeping the cycle of work, payment and exchange in motion.

Third: The reason which he has ascribed to the prohibition of making and using pots of gold or silver, that it is injustice and ingratitude, is equally applicable to ornaments made of gold and silver, as well as to money changing. And these things have not been prohibited by the *sharī‘ah,* nor are they considered by religion as injustice or ingratitude.

Fourth: What he has written as the reason for the prohibition of interest in gold and silver neither includes all cases of interest nor excludes cases of ‘‘non-interest’’. If the reason given by him, that is, injustice and ingratitude, were the real reason, it would have prohibited even money-changing and foreign exchange, just like those financial dealings in which interest is involved. And it would not have prevented interest in other things which are measured or weighed, like wheat and milk.

Therefore, his whole explanation is wrong in basic principle as well as in the other topics based on that principle.

The real reason for the prohibition, which Allāh has mentioned, fits perfectly the explanation given before by us: that the excess amount is taken without giving anything in exchange. Allāh says: *And whatever you lay out as interest, so that it may increase in the properties of men, it shall not increase with Allāh; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allāh's pleasure — it is these that shall get manifold* (30:39). This verse shows that interest increases ‘‘in the properties of men’’; in other words, it increases by adding to itself parts of other people's properties, as a seed grows by nourishing itself on earth, and adding parts of the earth to itself. Likewise, interest grows and grows while other people's properties go on decreasing until they are totally expended.

It is this Qur'ānic reason which we have described earlier.

Also, look at the words of Allāh, ‘‘and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you deal unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly’’. The verse says that you shall not deal with people unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly by the people or by Allāh. It means that interest is injustice against the people.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُبْ
بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ
وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي
عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمِلَّ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ
وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ
مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى وَلَا
يَأْبَ الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْأَمُوا أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَى
أَجَلِهِ ذَلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَى أَنْ لَا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ
تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا
وَأَشْهِدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ
وَاتَّقُوا اللهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللهُ وَاللهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ - ٢٨٢ . وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ
وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهَانٌ مَقْبُوضَةٌ فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي اؤْتُمِنَ
أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ - ٢٨٣ .

O you who believe! when you deal with each other in contracting a loan for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with justice; and the scribe should not refuse to write as Allāh has taught him, so he should write; and let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should fear Allāh, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it, but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding, or weak, or (if) *he is not able to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate with justice; and call in to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you approve of the*

witnesses, so that if one of the two errs, the (second) *one of the two may remind the other; and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned; and disdain not of writing it* (whether it is) *small or large, with its fixed time, this is more equitable with Allāh and assures greater accuracy in testimony, and the nearest* (way) *that you may not entertain doubts* (afterwards); *except when it is ready merchandise which you give and take among yourselves from hand to hand, then there is no blame on you in not writing it down; and have witnesses when you trade with one another; and let no harm be done to the scribe or to the witnesses; and if you do* (it) *then surely it will be a transgression in you, and fear Allāh; and Allāah teaches you, and Allāh knows all things* (282). *And if you are on a journey and you do not find a scribe, then* (there may be) *a security taken into possession; but if one of you trusts another, then he who is trusted should deliver his trust, and let him fear Allāh, his Lord; and do not conceal testimony, and whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful; and Allāh knows what you do* (283).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *O you who believe! when you deal with each other in contracting a loan . . . and Allāh knows all things: ''at-Tadāyun''* (التَّدَايُنْ) is to give a loan to another; *''al-imlāl''* (الإمْلاَلُ) and *''al-imlā' ''* (الإمْلاَءُ) both mean 'to dictate'; *''al-bakhs''* (البَخْسُ) is to diminish, to do justice; *''as-sa'mah''* (السَّأْمَةُ) is to be fed up; to disdain; *''al-muḍārrah''* (المُضَآرَّةُ) on the paradigm of *''al-mufā'ilah''* (المُفَاعِلَةُ) from *''aḍ-ḍarar''* (الضَّرَرُ =harm) means to harm one another; *''al-fusūq''*(الفُسُوْقُ) is transgression, refusal to obey; *''ar-rihān''* (الرِّهَانُ) has also been recited as *ar-ruhun* (الرُّهُنُ), both are the plurals of *ar-rahn* (الرَّهْنُ = the thing mortgaged, pawned or deposited as security).

‘‘And let him who owes the debt dictate . . . but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding . . .’’ The whole phrase ‘‘he who owes the debt’’ has been repeated here instead of using a pronoun. It was done to remove any possible misunderstanding, as a pronoun could easily be mistaken to refer to the ‘‘scribe’’ mentioned in the preceding sentence.

‘‘. . . or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate . . .’’ The manifest and separate pronoun *‘‘huwa’’* (هُوَ = translated here as ‘‘himself’’) has been included in the sentence to show that in this particular case the debtor and his guardian both have the right to dictate. In the first two situations, when the debtor is deficient in understanding or is weak (in body or mind), the guardian has total authority, and the debtor himself cannot deal in his own affairs. But in this third situation when the debtor is, for any reason, unable to dictate himself, then the guardian shall have joint authority to do so. Therefore, this pronoun has given the following meaning to the phrase: ‘‘what such a debtor himself can do, he should do it; but what he is unable to do, his guardian shall do it ’’.

‘‘ . . . so that if one of the two errs, the (second) one of the two may remind the other’’: In this sentence a word, *ḥadhar* (حَذَرَ) is understood before *an* (أَنْ); together they literally mean, ‘‘lest one of the two errs . . .’’; the words, ‘‘one of the two’’ have been repeated in this sentence. While at first glance it would appear that the second phrase could be replaced by a pronoun, the fact is that the two phrases do not have the same significance. The first phrase (*if one of the two errs*) refers to either of the two without pointing to a particular woman; the second phrase (*the one of the two may remind . . .*) points particularly to the second who has not erred. That is why we have added the word (second) in its translation.

‘‘And fear Allāh’’; The believers should guard themselves against disobeying the orders and prohibitions promulgated in this verse. ‘‘And Allāh teaches you’’; it is an independent sentence, not connected with the preceding one, ‘‘and fear Allāh’’. The sentence describes the grace of Allāh bestowed on the believers. In this respect it is like the words of Allāh in the verse of inheritance: *Allāh makes it clear to you lest you err* (4:176). Allāh in both these sentences shows that He has bestowed His bounties upon the believers by teaching them the rules of religion and by

instructing them as to what they were allowed to do and what not.

Some people have said that the sentence, ‘‘and fear Allāh, and Allāh teaches you’’, were connected to each other. According to them, they show that there is a relation of cause and effect between the two — when people fear Allāh then Allāh teaches them.

Comment: The principle mentioned above is correct in itself, and is supported by other verses of the Qur’ān and by traditions. But this verse has nothing to do with that principle. The second sentence begins with ‘‘and’’; if it had wanted to enunciate that principle, the word ‘‘and’’ would not have been there; the sentence would have been like this: ‘‘and fear Allāh, He will teach you’’. Moreover, the said interpretation is not supported by the context; if we accept it then the end of the verse will be quite irrelevant to the main topic of the verse.

The above-mentioned reconstruction of the verse gives us another argument against that interpretation. Had that meaning been correct, the divine name, Allāh, would not have been repeated in ‘‘and Allāh teaches you’’, a pronoun would have been more appropriate.

In these three consecutive short sentences, the divine name, Allāh, has been repeated three times. It was necessary in the first sentence, ‘‘and fear Allāh’’; it had to be repeated in ‘‘and Allāh teaches you’’, because it was an independent sentence; and in the last sentence, ‘‘and Allāh knows all things’’, the name gives the proof of this statement — He knows all things because He is Allāh.

The two verses contain nearly twenty basic rules concerning loan, mortgage, evidence, etc. There are numerous traditions about these and related topics. But the proper place to go into these details are the books of jurisprudence. Therefore, we shall not quote them here.

* * * * *

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ وَإِنْ تُبْدُوا مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبْكُمْ بِهِ اللهُ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللهُ عَلَي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٨٤) .

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allāh's; and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allāh will call you to account for it, then He will forgive whom He pleases and chastise whom He pleases; and Allāh is powerful over all things (284).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ĀN: *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allāh's:* Allāh is the Owner of all creation, whether it is in the heavens or in the earth. This declaration paves the way for the next sentence, ''and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allāh will call you to account for it''. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; and among those things are you as well as your actions, and all that your souls have earned. Therefore, Allāh encompasses you and preserve your deeds; it makes no difference to Him whether your actions are manifest or hidden, He will call you to account for them.

It has been said that the heavens have an affinity with the mind's

faculties, psychological traits and spiritual characteristics. What is in our souls or minds is a part of what is in the heavens, and it belongs to Allāh. When the hidden traits and characteristics manifest themselves through the actions of the body; they become a part of what is in the earth, and that also belongs to Allāh. Thus, whatever is found in our minds, whether it is manifested or remains hidden, belongs to Allāh, and He will decide about it after calling us to account for it.

QUR'ĀN: *and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allāh will call you to account for it: ''al-Ibdā' ''* (الإبْدَاءُ = to manifest) is opposite of *''al-ikhfā' ''* (الإخْفَاءُ = to hide).

''What is in your souls'' means ''what is settled in your minds''; it is the meaning that is understood by scholars of the language as well as the general public. It refers to traits and characteristics, whether good or bad, like belief and disbelief, love and hate, strength or weakness of the will, and so on. These traits may be manifest or hidden. They are manifested through the actions of body, which may be perceived by others and which prove the existence of those traits in the doer. One knows that but for those particular traits, for example, love or hate, belief or disbelief, inclination or repulsion, those deeds could not be done. In this manner, actions manifest the motives that are fixed in the minds of the doers.

Conversely, these traits may remain hidden if one does not do any action that could prove their existence in one's mind.

We have said above that ''what is in your souls'' means what is settled in your minds. It does not mean ineradicable and firmlyrooted characteristics; rather it refers to the substantial existence of such characteristics from which actions may emanate.

The two alternatives, ''whether you manifest . . .'' and ''hide it'', show that those characteristics are capable of being shown or hidden; it may be a well-ingrained trait or some appropriate psychological state. But it does not, and cannot, mean passing notions and transient ideas that invade one's mind without one's intention; for example, the mental image of a sin when one has no intention or inclination to do it. The words of the verse do not include such involuntary notions, because they are not ''settled'' in the mind, nor does any action emanate from them.

The verse, in short, says that mental states, the characteristics and traits settled in mind, are the basis of a man's actions, obedient as well as

disobedient; and Allāh will call man to account for them. In this respect, this verse has the same significance as the following verses:

Allāh will not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned (2:225).

. . . his heart is surely sinful (2:283).

. . . surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that (17:36).

These verses prove that there are some conditions and characteristics of hearts, that is, minds, for which man will be called to account. The following verse also proves it:

Surely (as for) *those who love that scandal should circulate respecting those who believe, they shall have a grievous chastisement in this world and the hereafter . . .* (24:19).

It shows that the chastisement shall be because of the ‘‘love’’ of circulating scandal; and love is a state of mind.

This is the apparent and clear meaning of this verse. It proves that man shall be called to account for what is settled in his mind, whether he hides it or shows it. But the verse is silent on the questions as to whether the chastisement in all cases — manifesting it or hiding it, acting according to one's intention or not doing so, succeeding in the intended transgression or not succeeding — will be the same or different.

Most of the commentators have misunderstood the significance of the verse. They have thought that it is said that man will be asked about even a passing notion that invades the mind, even if it has not settled therein and even when it is beyond the control of a man. Holding a man responsible for such fleeting notions is, without doubt, imposing a duty beyond the limit of one's ability. From this point on, these commentators have differed among themselves.

a) Some have admitted that Allāh might impose on a soul a duty beyond its furthest limit.

Others have tried to escape from this difficulty in various ways :

b) Some have accepted that the verse ordained for man what was in fact a duty beyond his ability. But, they claimed, it was abrogated by the sentence in the next verse: ‘‘Allāh does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability’’.

Comment: It has been clearly shown that the verse does not include such transitory ideas and notions. Therefore, the whole argument and interpretation is out of place. Moreover, imposing a duty beyond one's ability is, *ab initio*, against reason; Allāh cannot do so even for a single moment. He has declared that He never ordained anything in religion beyond our ability: . . . *and* (He) *did not lay upon you any hardship in religion* (22:78).

c) Some others said that the verse was connected with the preceding one, and that it speaks particularly about the hiding of testimony.

Comment: This restriction of meaning is clearly against the general nature of the verse.

d) Still others have said that it was restricted to the unbelievers. Only they shall be called to account for their fleeting fantasies.

Comment: This restriction too is against the generality of the verse.

e) Someone else has interpreted the verse in this way: If you manifest your hidden evil by committing transgression openly, or if you keep it hidden by committing sins secretly, in both cases Allāh will call you to account for it. According to this interpretation, the chastisement shall be, not for the ideas, but for the sins.

Comment: Such interpretation is totally against the apparent and clear meaning of the verse.

f) Yet others have said that ‘‘what is in your souls’’ means any kind of idea, whether fixed or otherwise. But ‘‘Allāh will call you to account for it’’ means ‘‘Allāh will inform you of it’’. According to this interpretation, the verse is similar to the verse: . . . *so He will inform you of what you did* (5:105). Whether we manifest such ideas and notions or hide them, Allāh will tell us about them on the Day of Resurrection.

Comment: This interpretation too, like the preceding one, is totally against the clear meaning of the verse.

QUR'ĀN: *then He will forgive whom He pleases and chastise whom He pleases; and Allāh is powerful over all things:* The alternatives of ‘‘forgiveness’’ and ‘‘chastisement’’ give a hint that ‘‘what is in your souls’’ refers especially to evil thoughts and characteristics. Although ‘‘forgiveness’’ has also been used in the Qur'ān in a few such cases where no sin was involved, it is a very uncommon, indeed a rare, usage,

and there should be some strong reason and clear association before the word ‘‘forgiveness’’ is being diverted to such meaning.

‘‘And Allāh is powerful over all things’’: It gives the reason for the said forgiving and chastising; or it may show the reason for the whole verse.

TRADITIONS

It is narrated in *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim from Abū Hurayrah that he said: ‘‘When the verse: *Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is Allāh’s; and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allāh will call you to account for it* was revealed to the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.), the companions of the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.) were very much perturbed. They came to the Messenger of Allāh and crouched down (before him) and said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh! we were ordered to do what we were able to do — prayer, fasting, fighting and charity; but (now) Allāh has sent down this verse and it is beyond the extent of our ability.’ Thereupon, the Messenger of Allāh said: ‘Do you want to say as the people of the book before you said, ‘‘We hear and we disobey’’? Rather, you should say, ‘‘We hear and obey; our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave) and to Thee is (our) march.’’ ’ When they recited it, and their tongues had been subdued by it, Allāh immediately revealed: *The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and* (so do) *the believers . . . . and to Thee is* (our) *march.* When they did so, Allāh abrogated that (law) and revealed (the verse): *Allāh does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability . . .’’*

The author says: as-Suyūṭī has narrated in *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr* through Aḥmad, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd (in his *an-Nāsikh wa ’l-mansūkh*), Ibn Jarīr, Ibnu ’l-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Abū Hurayrah; and he has narrated another tradition with nearly the same meaning through several chains from Ibn ‘Abbās. And the abrogation has been narrated through several chains from other companions too, like Ibn Mas‘ūd and ‘Ā’ishah.

And it has been narrated from ar-Rabī‘ ibn Anas that the verse is

confirmed and unabrogated; and that ‘‘calling to account’’ means that Allāh will inform the servant, on the Day of Resurrection, about his deeds which he did in this world.

And it has been narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās through several chains that the verse is restricted to hiding and giving testimony. Accordingly, it is a confirmed verse, not abrogated.

And it has been narrated from ‘Ā’ishah that calling to account means the vexation and grief which a man feels when he intends to commit a sin and does not do it. This interpretation also treats the verse as confirmed and unabrogated.

And it has been narrated, through the chains of ‘Alī, from Ibn ‘Abbās about the words of Allāh: *and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it* (i.e. all your hidden and manifest affairs) *Allāh will call you to account for it,* that it is not abrogated. When Allāh gathers the creatures on the Day of Resurrection, He shall say: ‘‘I shall inform you of what you had hidden in your souls which my angels were not aware of.’’ Then, as for the believers, He shall tell them what they had imagined in their souls, and will forgive them. It is the word of Allāh: *Allāh will call you to account for it,* that is, will inform you. And as for the people of doubt and suspicion, He shall inform them of the denial of truth which they had kept hidden; and it is the word of Allāh: . . . *but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned.*

The author says: All these traditions, in spite of their mutual differences. have one thing in common: All are against the clear meaning of the Qur’ān, as explained earlier. The verse clearly says that men will be called to account for what their hearts have earned either directly or through other limbs; and there is no ‘‘earning’’ in passing notions and fleeting images which invade the mind. And testimony does not differ in this from other affairs, nor is there any difference in this matter between a believer and an unbeliever; and ‘‘calling to account’’ evidently does not mean informing someone of his transitory thoughts; it obviously means calling one to account for reward or punishment. This is the clear meaning of this verse, and all other verses confirm this meaning.

So far as those traditions are concerned which say that this verse was abrogated, there are several defects in them.

First: They are against the evident meaning of the Verse, as

explained above.

Second: They claim that there is no injustice in imposing a duty on a soul beyond the limits of its ability. Such a thing is evidently invalid, and especially so if it is attributed to Allāh. The subsequent abrogation cannot right this wrong, rather the incongruity will increase; the tradition says, ''. . . when they recited it . . . Allāh abrogated . . . '', in other words, the order was abrogated before it was acted upon. And such an ab ogation is not acceptable in Islam.

Third: You will see in the commentary of the next verses that the sentence, ''Allāh does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability'', is not capable of abrogating any rule. That verse says that every soul is confronted by whatever it has earned, whether it finds it hard to bear or easy. If such a thing was imposed upon a soul which it did not have the strength to bear, or if such a burden was laid upon it as was laid upon those before us, it was all the result of what the soul had itself earned, because of its wrong choice; it should not blame anyone but itself. With this background, the sentence: *Allāh dos not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability:* looks like a parenthetic sentence, written to remove any postiihie misunderstanding.

Fourth: The subject of the next two verses has nothing to do with fleeting thoughts and transitory ideas ; nor do those verses stand face to face with this verse as an abrogating verse stands in relation to an abrogated one.

In short, the purpose of the next verses is quite different from the aim of this verse, as you will see.

* * * * *

آمَنَ الرَّسولُ بِما أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللهِ وَمَلائِكَتِهِ
وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقالوا سَمِعْنا وَأَطَعْنا غُفْرانَكَ
رَبَّنا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصيرُ ـ ٢٨٥ . لا يُكَلِّفُ اللهُ نَفْساً إِلاَّ وُسْعَها لَها ما كَسَبَتْ
وَعَلَيْها ما اكْتَسَبَتْ رَبَّنا لا تُؤاخِذْنا إِنْ نَسينا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنا رَبَّنا وَلا تَحْمِلْ
عَلَيْنا إِصْراً كَما حَمَلْتَهُ عَلى الَّذينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنا رَبَّنا وَلا تُحَمِّلْنا ما لا طاقَةَ لَنا بِهِ وَاعْفُ
عَنّا وَاغْفِرْ لَنا وَارْحَمْنا أَنْتَ مَوْلانا فَانْصُرْنا عَلى الْقَوْمِ الْكافِرينَ ـ ٢٨٦ .

The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) *the believers; they all believe in Allāh and His angels and His books and His apostles; We make no difference between any of His apostles; and they say: ''We hear and obey; our Lord! Thy forgiveness* (do we crave), *and to Thee is* (our) *march''* (285). *Allāh does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it* is (the benefit of) *what it has earned, and upon it* (the evil of) *what it has wrought; ''Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake; Our Lord! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us; Our Lord! do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear; and pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us; Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people''* (286).

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GENERAL COMMENT

These are the last verses of this chapter. They summarize the details given in it, and recapitulate its main objective. As we mentioned at the beginning, the chapter aimed to show that it was an integral part of the worship of Allāh to believe in all that He sent to His creatures through His apostles, without making any difference between those apostles. It is this reality which is described in the first of these verses: ‘‘The Apostle believes . . . between any of His apostles’’.

The chapter then gives many stories of the Israelites: How Allāh bestowed upon them His countless bounties, like the Book, the prophethood, the kingdom, etc., and how they answered it with disobedience, rebellion, breach of covenant and even infidelity. It is these stories that are obliquely hinted at in the remaining part of the first and the whole of the second verse, where the believers are reported as saying ‘‘We hear and obey’’, and then they go on seeking the protection, forgiveness and help of Allāh.

Thus, these verses connect the end of the chapter with its beginning. The epilogue is a mirror of the prologue.

Allāh opens this chapter by describing the qualities that are essential for a God-fearing people, and without which they cannot discharge their duties towards their Lord. He says that His pious and God-fearing servants believe in the unseen, keep up prayer, spend out of the sustenance given to them by Allāh, believe in that which was revealed to the Apostle and to the previous apostles and are sure of the life hereafter (vide verses 2 — 5 of this chapter). Allāh guides them through the Qur’ān; and then He shows the contrast between them and the infidels and hypocrites.

Then the talk turns to the affairs of the people of the Book and especially the Jews. It explains how Allāh, in His grace, guided them, and exalted them with His bounties and favours. And what was their response to all those favours? They became arrogant, disobeyed the commandments of Allāh, and repaid His bounties with ingratitude; they stood against Allāh and His apostles, bore malice against His angels, and made differences between one apostle and the other, and one book and the other. As a result, Allāh laid on them heavy burdens, like the

order to kill their own people; and imposed upon them that which they had no strength to bear, like turning them into apes, and sending lightening and plague from the sky on them.

After going into all these details, Allāh recounts in these two verses the good attributes of the Apostle and the believers who have followed him; He shows that their condition is in clear contrast with that of the people of the Book. They have responded to the divine bounties and guidance with submission and obedience; they believe in Allāh, His angels, His books and His apostles, without making any difference between any of the apostles. And they know their own limitations as powerless mortals, and recognize the all-pervasive power of Allāh. Although they have unconditionally submitted to the Caller towards the truth, they confess that they cannot do justice to that Call because of their inherent weakness and ignorance. They are afraid that they may transgress the limit by forgetfulness or mistake, or that they may fall short in their duties of divine worship; they are worried lest a sinful act puts them in disgrace, as happened with the people of the Book before them. Therefore, they beseech the All-merciful Lord and pray to Him not to punish them if they forget or make a mistake, not to lay on them a burden and not to impose upon them that which they have not the strength to bear; they entreat Him to pardon them, to forgive their mistakes and to have mercy on them, and to help them against the unbelieving people.

This is the true place of these two verses in the scheme of this chapter; they are a sort of resume of the chapter. This observation should be enough to further repudiate the claims of the commentators:

a) that these verses were connected with the preceding one: ''and whether you manifest what is in your souls or hide it, Allāh will call you to account for it'';

b) that this preceding verse imposed a duty upon every soul beyond the limit of its ability;

c) that the first of these verses, ''The Apostle believes . . . and to Thee is (our) march'', describes how the companions submitted to, and accepted, this imposition of duty beyond the limit of their ability;

d) And that the second of these verses, ''Allāh does not impose . . . help us against the unbelieving people'', abrogated that verse which

imposed such duty.

Moreover, our explanation is in perfect harmony with the reported ‘‘reason of revelation’’ of this chapter, that it was the first chapter revealed at Medina. The Prophet emigrated to Medina, and settled therein; the Medinite believers, that is, the Helpers (*anṣār*), eagerly accepted the divine religion, and stood up to help the Apostle of Allāh with their properties and lives; the Emigrant believers (*muhājirūn*) abandoned their properties and homes, and left their families and children in the cause of Islam, and came to Medina to remain with the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.a.). That was indeed the time when Allāh should have praised them for their answering the Call of His Prophet with acceptance and obedience, and thanked them for their submission.

The last sentence ‘‘Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people’’ also indicates that this prayer was at a time when Islam had begun its march forward, and when there was danger of attack from the unbelievers.

This verse contains wonders of elocution; there is generality followed by specification, and brevity by amplification; it shows the servants of Allāh the perfect way of submission and servitude; and, in short, contains all the basic elements of perfection and felicity.

COMMENTARY

QUR’ĀN: *The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and* (so do) *the believers;* This makes known the belief of the Apostle and the believers. The Apostle has been mentioned separately as the one who believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord; then the believers have been joined to him in this virtue; it has been done to maintain the dignity of the Apostle. It is the usual style of the Qur’ān: On such occasions, it first mentions the name of the Apostle separately, and thereafter the believers are joined to him. Look, for example, at following verses: . . . *then Allāh sent down His tranquillity on His Apostle and on the believers* (48:26); . . . *on the day on which Allāh will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him* . . . (66:8).

QUR’ĀN: *they all believe in Allāh and His angels and His books and His*

apostles: This specifies the generality of the preceding sentence: ‘‘What has been revealed’’ to the Messenger of Allāh demands belief in Allāh and acceptance of the truth of the books and apostles and angels who are Allāh’s honoured servants. Whoever believes in what has been revealed to the Messenger of Allāh must believe in all those things, in a suitable manner.

QUR’ĀN: *We make no difference between any of His apostles:* It is the quotation of the believers’ saying, without using the introductory verb, ‘‘They said’’. We have explained in the commentary of verse 2:127 (*And when Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl were raising the foundations of the House; ‘‘Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing’’*) the general reason for this type of quotation, and how it is one of the most elegant styles of the Qur’ān. Apart from that basic reason of portraying the speakers before the eyes and ears of the imagination there was in this case one particular reason for omission of the words ‘They said’: this speech depicts the believers’ state of mind; it does not describe their verbal declaration. Even if we suppose that they actually uttered these words, each of them must have done so individually and in his heart; they never said it jointly and together by their tongues. It was only their shared faith that announced this belief, not in words but in their state of minds, which spoke louder than the words.

This verse quotes two sayings of the believers, one after another, but with different styles: ‘‘We make no difference . . .’’ is without the words ‘They said’; then the sentence is followed immediately by, ‘‘and they say: ‘We hear and obey . . .’ ’’ which, as we see, is introduced with, ‘‘they say’’. Yet both are the believers’ sayings when they answered the Call of the Prophet. The reason for this difference is that the first sentence describes the state of their minds, while the second was actually uttered by them in words.

The verse begins by describing the belief of all the believers, ‘‘everyone of them’’ taken separately. Then it turns to plural verbs and pronouns (*We make no difference . . .*), and it continues upto the end. What was done in this respect by the people of the Book was done by their whole of their nations. The Jews made a difference between Mūsā on the one hand, and ‘Īsā and Muḥammad on the other; the Christians made a difference between Mūsā and ‘Īsā on one hand, and Muḥammad on the other. Thus they became divided into many groups and sects,

although Allāh had created them one people. Also, they were chastised and heavy burdens were imposed on the whole of their groups jointly, not separately. And the prayer at the end of the verse 'to be helped against the unbelieving people' was, likewise, a collective affair. Therefore, all these things demanded plural words. In contrast to this, ''belief'' is a personal and individual matter, and it was appropriate to describe it in an individualistic style and a singular number.

QUR'ĀN: *And they say: ''We hear and obey; Our Lord! Thy forgiveness* (do we crave), *and to Thee is* (our) *march'':* ''We hear and obey'' is not information; it is the declaration of their submission to the divine command. To hear allegorically means to accept and believe in; to obey is used for complying with order. Together these two words point to the acceptance of the call through believing with the heart and doing one's duty with the body. Thus hearing and obeying refer to perfect belief.

Their declaration to hear and obey is, thus, fulfilment of the rights Allāh has on His servants; it is the sum total of the duties that Allāh has imposed upon them: to hear and to obey. It is the ''worship'' mentioned in the following verses : *And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me. I do not desire from them any sustenance and I do not desire that they should feed Me* (51:56 — 57); *Did I not enjoin you, O children of Adam! that you should not worship the Satan? Surely, he is you open enemy, and that you should worship Me; this is the right way* (36:60 — 61).

And Allāh has decreed on His Own Self a right for His servants, in consideration of the above-mentioned duty imposed on them, that is, forgiveness. It is a thing which nobody can do without — right from the apostles and the prophets to an ordinary believers. Allāh promised them that He would forgive them if they obeyed and worshipped Him. This promise was the first thing ordained when the *sharī'ah* was given to Adam: *We said: Get down you therefrom all together; and when there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve* (2:38). And it is what forgiveness means.

The believers said ''We hear and obey''; their declaration of faith and obedience was unconditional, they did what was expected of them

about the rights of their Lord. Then they asked the Lord to bestow upon them His promised grace, that is, forgiveness. They said: ''Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is (our) march.'' *''al-Maghfirah''* (الْمَغْفِرَةُ) , and *al-ghufrān* (الغُفْرَانُ), both of which are translated as ''forgiveness'', literally mean ''to cover''. When Allāh forgives the sin of a servant, the due punishment is averted from him; in other words, Allāh covers and hides his shortcomings. This grace will be bestowed upon the servant when he reaches His Lord. That is why they said, soon after praying for forgiveness, ''and to Thee is (our) march.''

QUR'ĀN: *Allāh does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is* (the benefit of) *what it has earned, and upon it* (the evil of) *what it has wrought: ''al-Wus' ''* (الوُسْعُ) is ability and power. Originally, the word was used for dimension, to show the area or capacity of a place or receptacle; then the power of man was thought of as a receptacle from which his actions come forth. A man has the ability to do a certain task; it is as though the said task is accomodated in his ability. On the other hand, a task which he cannot do is too great for his power and ability. In this way, the word 'dimension' came to mean power and ability.

As mentioned above, it is the sum total of the rights of Allāh on man that he should hear and obey. Obviously, man can say ''I hear'' only about that which he can understand; how can he answer by hearing and accepting what he cannot understand? Also, he can say ''I obey'' only about that which can be performed by his faculties and organs directly or through some tools. Obedience means that man follows the given order, and his faculties and organs are actuated to perform accordingly. The question of obedience does not arise about things that cannot be done; for example, if one is told to hear by his eyes, or to sit in two rooms at the same time, or that one should be born from his parents a second time. No such order can be given by any sane person. When the believers answer the Call of religion with hearing and obedience, it means that the Call is about such things that are within their power and ability; and it is these things which man obeys or disobeys, earning for himself what will benefit him or harm him. The ''earning'', mentioned in this verse, is the best proof to show that what man earns, he earns through his ability and power.

The words of Allāh ‘‘Allāh does not impose upon any soul . . .’’ describe the divinely established system that Allāh does not impose upon His servants what is beyond their power; for example, He does not tell them to believe in that which is beyond their understanding; nor does He ordain for them a duty which they cannot do. This is, also, the custom of all sane persons. It is a sentence that is neither more nor less than the believers’ declaration ‘‘We hear and obey’’; it agrees with it perfectly.

This sentence, that is, ‘‘Allāh does not impose upon any soul . . .’’, is in perfect harmony with the preceding and the following sentences. It is related to the preceding one, as it shows that Allāh does not impose any duty except that which the servants can hear and obey, that is, which is within their ability and power.

And it is related to the following sentences, as it shows that what the Apostle and the believers prayed for — that Allāh should not punish them if they forget or do a mistake, and should not lay on them burden as He laid on past nations, and should not impose upon them anything which they do not have strength to bear — was not an imposition beyond the extent of their ability, although such things, if imposed, could cause hardship. When Allāh imposes upon a group that which they have not the strength to bear, it is not the imposition of a duty; it is the imposition of a punishment for their transgression and rebellion.

Forgetfulness and committing mistakes, *per se,* are beyond man’s power; but, more often than not, it is man himself who paves the way for them. It is possible to prevent these two (forgetfulness and erring) by desisting from those things which cause them. It is especially true in cases where one forgets or commits a mistake because of his wrong choice.

The same may be said about laying on one a burden like that which was laid upon previous people. It refers to the cases in which Allāh imposed hard rules in place of easy ones, when those people went against those easy rules. It was not the unwarrantable imposition of duty beyond one’s ability; it was brough upon them by those people themselves because of their wrong choice. And such punishing rules are not bad in law.

QUR’ĀN: *Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake.* They first said, ‘‘We hear and obey’’ which showed their

unconditional surrender and obedience. Then they looked at themselves and became aware of their intrinsically weak and imperfect being. Also, they remembered what had happened to previous nations. This prompted them to beseech their Lord for mercy, and they prayed to Him not to take them to task as He had done with past people. They sought His protection because Allāh had taught them that there was no power or strength except from Allāh, and that nothing can save from Allāh's displeasure except His mercy.

Why did the Apostle prayed to Allāh in these words when he was sinless and protected from mistake and forgetfulness? He did so because his sinlessness had come from Allāh; he was protected from mistake and forgetfulness by Allāh's protection. Therefore, it was quite in order for him to include himself in the group of believers to ask from his Lord what he knew was a grace of the Lord.

QUR'ĀN: *Our Lord! do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us: ''al-Iṣr''* (الاصْرُ = burden) is also interpreted as detaining a thing by force. This is not very far from the first meaning: If a thing is confined and detained forcefully it puts a heavy burden on it.

''Those before us'' refers to the people of the Book and especially the Jews, because this chapter describes many strories about them; and because the seventh chapter, *inter alia,* refers to the Apostle of Islam in these words: . . . *and removes from them* (the people of Torah and Injīl) *their burden and the shackles which were upon them* . . . (7:157).

QUR'ĀN: *Our Lord! do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear:* It does not refer to unbearable rules of the *sharī'ah,* because reason does not allow such rules, and Allāh has Himself said that He does not impose any duty beyond one's limit of ability; and the words of the believers ''We hear and obey'' show that Allāh's commandments are within their ability to understand and act.

This sentence in fact refers to severe punishments meted out to previous peoples — the imposition of retaliatory hard rules, sending upon them severe chastisements or transforming them into animals or insects.

QUR'ĀN: *And pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us: ''al-'Afw''* (العَفْوُ) is to erase the signs of a thing; *al-maghfirah* is to cover it ; *''ar-raḥmah''* (الرَّحْمَةُ) is mercy. From the linguistic point of view, the three sentences proceed from branch to root and from particular to

general. The believers beseech Allāh first to erase and eradicate the sign of their sin (by removing its due punishment from them) , then they ask Him to cover and hide the sin (by letting all concerned forget about it completely); lastly they crave for His mercy that will cover the sin and make them worthy of of His grace.

The three sentences are in conjunction with the previous ones: ''Our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or do a mistake . . .'' The context shows that the pardon, forgiveness and mercy asked for are in connection with such sins which they might commit by forgetfulness or mistake. Therefore, the forgiveness asked for in this verse is in a particular context; it is not like the forgiveness aked for in the previous verse, ''Thy forgiveness (do we crave) '', which is an unrestricted and unconditional forgiveness in consideration of the believers' unrestricted and unconditional acceptance of the Call.

It is clear from the above that there is no repetition of the prayer of forgiveness, because both are in separate contexts.

In these prayers the word ''Lord'' has been repeated four times. This was done to invoke the divine mercy. The name ''Lord'' by contrast, hints to the servitude and total dependence of the beseecher.

QUR'ĀN: *Thou art our Guardian, so help us against the unbelieving people:* It is an independent sentence and a separate prayer. *''al-Mawlā''* (المَوْلي) means 'helper' — not any helper, but that one who looks after the affairs of the helped one. The root word is *al-wilāyah* (الوِلَايَةُ = to govern, to rule, to take charge of). Allāh is the Ruler of the believers; therefore, He is their Guardian in all their affairs. Allāh says: . . . *and Allāh is the Guardian of the believers* (3:68); *That is because Allāh is the Master of those who believe, and because the unbelievers have no master for them* (47:11).

This prayer of theirs shows that their only desire, after hearing and obeying the basic religion, was to spread the true faith and to fight in the way of Allāh to establish the word of truth, so that all the nations could unite in that cause. Allāh says: *Say: ''This is my way: I invite you unto Allāh; with clear sight* (are) *I and he who follows me; and glory be to Allāh, and I am not of the polytheists''* (12:108). To call to the faith of monotheism is the way of true religion. It involves one in fighting, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and in all the methods of

propagation of religion. This is done to remove the root of discord from the human species. The importance attached to this endeavour may be understood from the verse: *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nūḥ and that which We have revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and ʻĪsā, that establish the religion and be not divided therein* (42:13).

This prayer of the believers (*Thou are our Guardian, so help us . . .*) proves that the first thing that came into their minds after firmly deciding to hear and obey, was the general call to invite the whole of mankind to the religion of truth. And Allāh knows better.

Wa ’l-ḥamdu li ’llāh (And praise and thank be to Allāh).

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LIST OF THE IMPORTANT SUBJECTS EALT WITH IN THIS VOLUME

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